

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

Monday October 19th, 2020

5:00 pm – 7:00 pm

MEETING SUMMARY

Committee Members Present: Mark Naud (Chair), Bill Howland (Vice-Chair), Lori Fisher, Eric Clifford, Bob Fischer, David Mears

Committee Members Absent: Wayne Elliott, Rep. Leland Morgan, Rep Carole Ode, Sen. Randy Brock, Hilary Solomon, Jeff Wennberg, Sen. Ginny Lyons,

LCBP Staff in Attendance: Eric Howe, Lauren Jenness, Jim Brangan

Public Guests: Crea Lintilhac, Alex Bolinsky, John Krueger (CVNHP HAPAC Chair), Buzz Hoerr (LCBP E&O Committee Chair), Tom Metz (NYCAC member)

Meeting summary by Lauren Jenness, Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP)

5:00 – 5:25 pm

● **Welcome and Introductions**

- Mark Naud welcomed the group.

● **Public Comments**

- Alec Bolinsky introduced himself as an intern with David Mears at the Vermont Law School.
- Committee members expressed their concern over the state of Vermont's economy and reductions in revenue streams going to the Clean Water Fund and VTANR due to the pandemic.
 - Committee members noted that during past tight budgets VTANR has tended to meet budget needs by taking vacancy savings of high-level staff positions.
 - Originally a 2-month overlap was planned for Angela Shambaugh's, a career veteran who plays an essential role in the cyanobacteria program, position, however her position still is not filled.
 - There is indication that the Agency is trying to use money which should already be earmarked to fill holes in the budget.
 - Strong statements within our Action Plan for the legislature are required.
 - Eric Howe noted that Angela's position is funded using LCBP funds through the EPA via a contractual obligation between VTANR and EPA. He is planning to talk with VTANR leadership on how her position will be refilled. The paperwork to request permission to refill her position was submitted and has received DEC Commission approval.
 - A focus of the December meeting will be this topic.
- Eric Howe announced that the selection process for the new NYDEC Lake Champlain Coordinator is complete and LCBP hopes to have the new person in place within the month. In addition, the new LCBP CAC position is posted and open until Friday of this week. LCBP hopes to have someone in place by Jan 1st.

● **Review and vote on Draft September 14th VTCAC Meeting Summary (5 min)**

- Approval was pushed until November meeting as there was no committee quorum

5:25 – 6:15 pm

How the CVNHP will focus on the 50th Anniversary of the Clean Water Act

Jim Brangan provided an overview presentation on the CVNHP and how the organization and its partners focused on celebrating Women's Suffrage in 2020, Prohibition, Temperance, and Smuggling in 2021, and will focus on celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Clean Water Act in 2022. Committee members discussed ideas on networking and partnerships, education, interpretation, and marketing.

- Many CVNHP-funded grants focus on educator projects, local heritage projects, and student projects that interpret topics through the arts. <https://champlainvalleynhp.org/resources/grants/>
- There are opportunities for the three CACs to collaborate
- Non-profits, municipalities, and universities are eligible to receive CVNHP grants. Grants are usually not provided to for-profits, though the CVNHP is open to partnerships.
 - Partnering with the brewing industry is an interesting idea as all breweries rely on clean water. There is an opportunity to bring together breweries, cideries, hard alcohol to talk about prohibition, but with Covid it's hard to do.
 - By 2022 the CVNHP should have a good handle on this opportunity to bring in partners in the craft brewing industry. Ex. A non-profit could take the lead but some funding could come from marketing. Amplify messaging on the celebration and interpretation of these topics.
- Education on the Clean Water Act could focus on the big media stories – lead pollution in Detroit, Love Canal, etc. and how those events have negatively impacted the local communities. We could then connect them to more local issues, for example polluted municipal water supplies.
 - Tying historical water quality events to current public health issues
 - Idea of individual/collective advocacy
 - Ex. landfill leaking in aquifers in Plattsburgh
- Could focus on the legal history and prominent politicians that played critical roles in passing the Clean Water Act. For example, Senator Strafford. Having an organization get a grant to pull together this history would be beneficial.
 - There are many intersections between the Clean Water Act, International Joint Commission, and Great Lakes work that the Lake Champlain Basin benefits from.
 - Talk about how the Clean Water Act has actually worked on the ground, how the law has been more effective for wastewater treatment facility control of pollution than nonpoint source pollution.
 - Make the law relevant to today. The Clean Water Act is one of the single-most effective environmental laws in history and also has failed.
- Could have partnerships with universities, training programs, a virtual series of live lectures
 - Should get the community involved with learning about the Clean Water Act with the goal of doing something about it.
 - We are beyond awareness-raising at this point. The next generation wants to have the tools to solve future and current problems.
 - That is what good interpretation can do! Reflections of the past to think about the future. The Clean Water Act is a very interesting story.
- Focus on the Clean Water Act via the public trust and sense of ownership with actionable opportunities for future leaders to carry and move forward with. We need continued awareness and engagement around this.
- There is a big opportunity for storytelling. Focus could be on what the Clean Water Act stimulated or helped spur action on. Where citizen engagement came into play.
 - Ex. the phosphate detergent ban still remains to this day the single most significant source of phosphorus reductions. People that were involved in this battle are still around today.
 - Ex. WWTF accounted for 65% of phosphorus pollution in the 80s and now its 4%.
- The CVNHP/LCBP is part of the Champlain Basin Education Initiative (CBEI). There are many opportunities to collaborate with them on this topic. For example, bringing the story of the Clean Water Act civics lesson. Staff are also working with a class at UVM where students are working on a retrospective Lake Champlain State of the Lake Report which will cover years 1947-1972.

- There is a great opportunity here to present the cultural side of clean water and its importance and how culture has engaged with the technology and science to make changes. The point about enacting the phosphorus detergent ban is an important one.
 - The people that are going to get engaged will want to hear people's stories more than technical reports. Keep our eyes on that. Personal stories make us leap forward.
- Agree that we should amplify that it was an effective piece of legislation as well as point out profound gaps.
 - Ex. We find these gaps in Act 250. Neither Act 250 or the Clean Water Act wanted to have much to say about agriculture. It's important to look at where we are now in the context of the kinds of progress, we made in the whole spectrum of water quality management. Where the CWA touched the topic, we made progress, where it didn't its harder to make progress. Retrospective is a good opportunity to do this.
- David will share books, articles, and other resources about the Clean Water Act's history to Jim. David recommends Jim talking to Pat Parenteau at the Vermont Law School as he worked on the Clean Water Act at the national and state level.
- Jim asked if he could come back to the CACs in either May or June after the CVNHP and E&O grants are announced for some more cross-pollination.

6:15 – 7:00 pm

Committee Member Discussion

- Agricultural enforcement and related topics will be the topic of our November meeting.
- The December meeting will focus on 'Voices of Agriculture' in addition to the budget discussion impacts.
- There is a Clean Water Board meeting Thursday 10/22 at noon
- Sharing and encouraging the cross-pollination of committees via shared listservs.

Bill Howland made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Lori Fisher seconded. All in favor.