

New York Citizens Advisory Committee (NYCAC) on Lake Champlain's Future

**Monday February 22nd, 2021
1:00 pm – 3:30 pm**

DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

Attendance: Vic Putman (Chair), Steve Kramer, Charlotte Staats, Walt Lender, Peter Hagar, James Dawson, Tom Metz, Corrina Aldrich, Hannah Jacques, Laura Generous, Jackie Bowen

LCBP Staff: Erin Vinnie-Vollrath, Lauren Jenness, Katie Darr, Eric Howe, Colleen Hickey, Matt Vaughan, Sue Hagar, Elizabeth Lee, Jim Brangan

Presenters: Eric Howe, Matt Vaughan, Chris Fuller

Meeting summary by Katie Darr, Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP)

1:00 – 1:15 pm

- 1. Welcome and Introductions** – Vic Putman
- 2. Welcome to the new CAC Coordinator!**

Katie Darr introduced herself. Katie has a bachelor's in biology and environmental studies from Wesleyan University in Connecticut, a master's in Marine Resource Management from Oregon State University, and recently completed a yearlong science and policy fellowship with NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. Largely, her work has focused on stakeholder outreach and engagement to address shared natural resource concerns on a variety of scales and topics and she is looking forward to building on that foundation and working with you all to support the health of Lake Champlain and its surrounding communities. 80% of Katie's time commitment will be for CAC Coordination.

3. Public Comments

No public comments were made.

1:15 – 1:35 pm

4. Overview of the LCBP's History, Structure, and Programming (20 min) – Eric Howe

Eric Howe, Director of the LCBP and the Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership, provided a high-level overview of the LCBP including the goals for Opportunities for Action (OFA), structure, and programming. His presentation can be found in the meeting materials. Main points are included below:

History: The LCBP was created by congress in 1990 through the Lake Champlain Special Designation Act. The LCBP works closely with partners including government entities at all levels, academic institutions, and non-government organizations across the basin. The Federal Clean Water Act dictates the aspirational goals of the Opportunities for Action: (1) clear water, (2) healthy ecosystems, (3) thriving communities, (4) informed and involved public.

Structure: The LCBP is composed of the Steering Committee, Executive Committee, Advisory Committees, staff, and partners. The Steering Committee meets 4x/year and approves budget,

priorities identified in OFA, and awards all grants. The Executive Committee is a subset of the Steering Committee. Advisory Committees include: Technical, Education/Outreach, Heritage, and Citizen Advisory Committees. Partnerships are a key strength of the program.

Programming: The LCBP coordinates management efforts, shares knowledge, and awards grants.

1:35 – 1:55 pm

5. Overview of the TAC's Mission, Structure, and Research (20 min) – Matt Vaughan

Matt, the Technical Coordinator of the Lake Champlain Basin Program presented an overview of the Technical Advisory Committee's mission, purpose, and structure and highlighted recent research.

Mission & Role: The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is a LCBP committee that the Technical Team coordinates. The TAC presents technical information to the Lake Champlain Steering Committee that is used for decision making and directing resources. The TAC funds research on emerging issues and oversees and facilitates the technical aspects of LCBP-funded projects. Research is focused on learning how to better manage the Lake Champlain watershed through science. The TAC also interprets various monitoring program results to determine success.

Structure: The TAC is composed of in-the-field experts on topics relevant to the LCBP's mission like stormwater, fisheries, wastewater treatment facilities, public health, etc. The TAC has 20-25 members, but no minimum or maximum number is set. Similar to Vic's role as the NYCAC Chair, the TAC chair represents TAC on the LCBP Executive and Steering Committees. Members are appointed by the Lake Champlain Steering Committee and membership is volunteer based. Therefore, TAC membership is skewed to municipal, State, Federal, and academic representatives. TAC will be thinking about their recruitment process over the next few months. The TAC operates with Roberts Rules of Order. TAC meets the first Wednesday of each month Sept-June. Meetings are open to the public. TAC meetings are a good mix of informational presentations, reviewing reports, budget process, and cover current work and thoughts on future work. If you are interested in attending, connect with Matt, Katie, or Vic to receive agendas and meeting information.

Research: The TAC directs the LCBP Technical Program's research. Research is management driven and targets projects that inform better management of the lake and watershed. TAC targets the most critical gaps in understanding and works to close those gaps across the basin. The basin-wide Long Term Monitoring Program (LTMP) is the LCBP's flagship research program that dates back to the LCBP's genesis in 1990. The LTMP involves collecting water quality and biological samples throughout the lake at 15 stations and major tributaries at 22 stations. Next field season, 2 buoys will be deployed to start modernizing the program. The LTMP is an on-going core project with lots of work coming out of it. The Technical Team is launching a science blog that will try to summarize results of studies (generally 100–200-page reports) into a digestible format to improve public outreach and understanding of the wide range of projects supported by the LCBP.

Other projects include: measurements of mercury concentrations in fish tissue, DNA tracking of coliform bacteria for storm events with and without combined sewer overflows, research on agricultural tile drains, floodplain restoration to reduce phosphorous pollution in sediment, quantification of road salt pollution in Mirror Lake and its watershed, research to control internal phosphorous loading in Missisquoi Bay, aquatic habitat restoration to assess and remove culverts, effects of winter and climate change on nutrient loading to lakes, Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination (IDDE)

study in Plattsburgh, Stream Geomorphic Assessments (SGA) looking at geomorphic function and water quality, inventory of dams to prioritize and target dam removal, wide coverage LiDAR landcover mapping. If anyone is interested in learning more about this list of projects, please reach out to Matt mvaughan@lcbp.org.

- NYCAC voiced support of the blog and requested a summary of projects to keep track of the TAC's work.
- Hannah Jacques asked if LCBP provides funding for dam removals. Matt Vaughan noted that LCBP currently has funds going to dam removal projects in Vermont and funds towards the Trout Unlimited (TU) prioritization and planning dam inventory tool in New York. LCBP has partially funded dam removal projects in New York in the past, like Willsboro Dam, and expects that when the prioritization tool is complete more dams will be identified for removal and LCBP could partner with organizations to direct those resources. He mentioned the Lower Saranac River restoration and Imperial Mills Dam which is a point of interest and focus of NY-LCB Dam Task Force. Vic Putman added the Pennfield dam and expressed interest in an on-site review of the 3 Washington County dams that have potential for removal with Washington County Soil and Water Conservation District.

1:55 – 2:35 pm

6. Continuation of the Stream Gauge Network Discussion (40 min) – Chris Fuller

Chris Fuller, Ph.D is the Chief of Operations for Research, Applied Technology, Education, Services, Inc. (RATES). Chris was invited to speak about RATES' work as a follow-up to the previous meeting's discussion about the USGS stream gauge network in New York. RATES is a nonprofit corporation that recognizes the importance of continuous environmental data and the need to lower data collection costs. Chris presented about the work that RATES does to support their mission of the democratization of water and environmental data. He noted a strategy used in Texas is to involve municipalities to implement stations that can be used for ancillary purposes once installed. Great Lakes Observatory Network is also going in this direction to try to get their stakeholders to fund this kind of work. He also mentioned that RATES is working with trout fishermen in the Iron River who are interested in maintaining streams and conducting some sampling themselves. Chris expressed willingness to help with grant writing and proposal development to find monitoring solutions that will work for the group. His presentation can be found in the meeting materials.

- Vic Putman noted that the CAC's role is not to do the monitoring, but he wanted to expose the committee to what is available instead of or in conjunction with the USGS protocol, particularly in light of climate change and flooding events.
- Tom Metz asked if the sensor in the PVC pipe in the monitoring system was subject to freezing and if freezing would prevent sampling. Chris clarified that this particular monitoring system was located in Texas and they use schedule 40 aluminum that has been anchored to a bulkhead and run the data cable below the freeze line, so the sensor is protected. Tom added that the freeze lines in the basin can be very shallow. Chris noted that is an important consideration and that the benefit with the RATES sensors is they only cost a few hundred dollars so if they are damaged, they are more affordable to replace.
- When asked about the shelf life of the monitoring gear, Chris explained that the lifespan on a sensor depends on environmental conditions, but as a conservative estimate is 2 to 4 years before a sensor is damaged.

- Tom Metz inquired whether the sensor data was compatible and usable by LCBP. Chris clarified that RATES uses a standardized data format that could be customized if needed. RATES implements many of USGS' standard protocols, including the USGS stream gauge monitoring protocol. Matt added that there are opportunities to integrate the data that would be generated by the RATES sensors into what the LCBP is working on.
- Vic Putman asked if there are portable units for metrics other than flow, thinking it might be a practical way for Trout Unlimited to monitor some of the issues on the Saranac River. Chris explained that it is possible to use a portable unit to measure depth, but it is challenging to maintain vertical control and meaningful data requires vertical control. There are portable units for water quality.
- Vic Putman asked if there are considerations for adding real time video thinking that would be useful for ice jams and flooding events as having a gauge near the mouth of the river does not help when the tributaries are flooding. Chris affirmed that this is something that RATES is working on and thinks it could be done cheaply. He is not sure about live streaming but thinks it would be possible to have an automated signal to prompt a snapshot to visually capture what is going on.

2:35 – 3:15 pm

7. Continuation of the CAC Membership Discussion (40 min) – Vic Putman, Katie Darr, and Erin Vennie-Vollrath

Vic Putman, Katie Darr, Lauren Jenness, and Erin Vennie-Vollrath continued the discussion about CAC membership. Lauren shared a table of the background information provided by last meeting's participants. Hannah Jacques, Jackie Bowen, and Laura Generous responded to the same prompt: What brings you to the CAC, what are your issues of concern facing the CAC region, and are there areas you feel should be covered through representation on the CAC?

The NYCAC identified missing sector representation in the CAC and suggested some individuals that could bring the missing expertise to the CAC. Lauren reminded the group that the goal for each person on the committee is to represent the citizen voice, not speak on behalf of an organization they may be associated with.

Erin asked if there is or should be a requirement of living or working within the basin to be a member. Lauren explained that for the other advisory committees, living in the basin may not be a firm requirement, but as this is the citizen advisory committee most likely the people you want to serve on the committee would have ties in the region or live permanently in the basin to effectively use citizen voice to feed into the program and perhaps the state legislature as the VTCAC does.

The NYCAC identified additional topic areas of interest including: climate change, water levels in the lake, flooding, water infrastructure, erosion and sedimentation, and education and outreach to ensure residents understand these priority issues.

3:15 – 3:30 pm

8. NYCAC Discussion “Where Do We Go from Here?” (15 min) – Vic Putman

The NYCAC agreed that the following are areas for CAC improvement: membership process, member representation, involvement of a state representative or county legislature, recruitment, selection of targeted topics to work on, and updating the website. Vic, Katie, and Erin will meet to discuss

membership logistics and plan to begin drafting a member manual draft for CAC review and discussion at the next meeting.