

# **New York Citizens Advisory Committee (NYCAC) on Lake Champlain Management**

**Monday, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

**1:00 pm – 3:00 pm**

**Zoom**

## **APPROVED MEETING SUMMARY**

**Committee Members Present:** Walt Lender (Chair), James C. Dawson, Laura Klaiber, Steve Kramer, Colin Powers, Vic Putman

**Committee Members Absent:** Jackie Bowen, Ricky Laurin, Jane Gregware, Tom Metz, Charlotte Staats, Fred Woodward

**LCBP Staff:** Mae Kate Campbell, Katie Darr

**Public Guests:** Allison Gaddy

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

### **1. Welcome and Introductions** – Walt Lender

Walt welcomed attendees.

### **2. Public Comments**

No public comments were made.

### **3. ACTION ITEM:** Review and vote on draft June 26<sup>th</sup> meeting summary– Walt Lender

There was not a quorum present, this item has been moved to the next meeting's agenda.

### **4. State of the Lake Review** – Katie Darr, Mae Kate Campbell

LCBP is beginning work on the 2024 State of the Lake Report. The NYCAC reviewed the 2021 report and discuss what information and graphics should be added, removed, or edited. Comments and suggestions are summarized by report section below.

#### ***Introduction***

- Colin shared that he spoke with many people about water quality issues at the Adirondack Harvest Festival and few people understood how their actions impacted other segments of the lake. He suggested highlighting the interrelationship between lake segments more.
- Steve asked if the colors of the lake segments meant something or if there was something to infer from the different colors.
  - Jim suggested including a key or other explanatory text that the colors just indicate location.
- Laura suggested more contrast between the Northeast Arm and Malletts Bay titles. In the map they are clearly distinguished, but in the text the colors look the same.

## **Clean Water**

### *Figure 1. Mercury concentration in Lake Champlain Fish Tissue*

- Throughout the report, QR codes that link to additional information will be included. There are plans to link to a science blog article about this study.
- Laura supported the addition of QR codes so the report can focus on general information, but point people who want to go deeper in the right direction.
- Colin suggested linking to the latest consumption and swimming advisories on this page.
- Vic noted he would rather have more information than less. He supported Colin's suggestion to link to department of health advisories. He shared a report he recently read about Lake Memphremagog with over half of the bullheads having skin lesion. No definitive conclusions have been drawn, there is speculation it may be linked to industrial dumping of PFAS

### *Figure 2. Reported public beach closures on Lake Champlain*

- Jim noted this is a difficult figure to read.
- Laura suggested a more descriptive axis title for the graph at the top. "Number of reports" is not as intuitively understood as "Daily Status Reports by Beach."
  - Mae Kate shared LCBP has considered adding text in the top graphic to clarify the blue section = beaches open.
  - Colin endorsed the addition of that text, it was not clear the blue section referred to clean days.
- Vic asked for clarification on the number of reports. Mae Kate shared that every day every beach reports on whether or not the beaches were open or closed.
- Vic noticed Willsboro isn't included in the beaches listed in the graphic. Mae Kate noted that beaches with the highest traffic were included in the daily status reports graphic. Willsboro is excluded from that portion of the figure, but is included in the lake-wide beach status reports graphic on top.
- Jim asked what happened to Plattsburgh in 2020. Mae Kate clarified that Plattsburgh Municipal Beach was closed due to Covid for the whole recreational season in 2020.
- Colin suggested the header for the lower graph include a disclaimer like "daily status reports from selected beaches."
- Vic noted that boaters often just stop somewhere in the lake and jump in, this data misses that segment of the swimming public. Mae Kate noted that LCBP's recreating safely resources will be linked in the report.
- Walt asked if this cyanobacteria graphic was associated with pathogens for a reason. Mae Kate noted that LCBP has spoken about this issue and to the greatest extent possible will try to keep paired text and graphics on the same page. In this instance, the supporting text for this graphic is on the preceding page.

### *Figure 3. Combined sewer overflows in the Lake Champlain Basin*

- Mae Kate shared this was a new graphic last year and Resource Room staff has reported that it has been helpful to explain this issue to the public. This figure will be updated with new data.
- Jim suggested putting a list of the discharge points since there are so few.
- This is another opportunity to link to more information and resources, like the New York and Vermont discharge notifications and text alerts.

### *Figure 4. Cyanobacteria monitoring reports on Lake Champlain*

- Jim noted the yellow sections make such a small proportion of the graph, it's hard to read. Mae Kate clarified that the yellow being low is accurate to the fact that relative to the number of reports received, few of them were low alert.

- Jim suggested considering having a break in the axis to only show 50-100%.
- Laura noted that if we zoom in, it detracts from the fact that there's only really a small segment of concern. We don't want to make it look worse to the untrained eye.

*Figure 5. Annual phosphorus loading to Lake Champlain by land cover*

- Jim asked for clarification about what qualifies as developed land. Mae Kate noted that this comes from satellite data focused on paved areas and impervious surfaces, she would need to refer to the dataset for more specifics about how it is defined.
- Colin asked why wastewater treatment facilities are included in the graphic on the left but not on the right. Mae Kate clarified that relative to the amount of land and forest, wastewater treatment facilities and streambanks take up a very small land area. Both are small land areas with large contributions to the annual phosphorus load.

*Figure 7. Phosphorus loading to Lake segments compared to TMDL limits*

- Jim commented on the concerning trends in this graph and the impacts of climate change on water quality.
- Colin noted it is important to drive the sense of urgency.
- Walt: agrees with approach to distribute flood info into the various sections
- Vic asked how long it takes for the lake to turn over and whether most things are tied up in sediment. Mae Kate clarified that the residence time varies by lake section.
- Vic commented on drinking water concerns related to climate change impacts to water quality. He suggested including information on potential impacts of climate change to drinking water in the Lake Champlain Basin.
- Laura asked if there was an opportunity to address legacy phosphorus a little more in conjunction with the discussion of shallow bays. There may be potential to tie in riparian areas and their contributions as well.

*Figure 8. Annual phosphorus load from wastewater treatment facilities by jurisdiction*

- Vic asked if there were opportunities in the report to highlight the work communities are doing and the funds they are spending to improve wastewater systems. How much funding is being allocated to improve infrastructure that will benefit water quality?

*Contaminants*

- Mae Kate noted that this section will include mention of the research LCBP is funding to study impacts of emerging contaminants and PFAs was not mentioned in the 2021 edition, but will be in the 2024 edition of the report.
- Steve liked the use of the word emerging. Some of these things, like chloride, haven't been traditionally on people's radars as a contaminant, but are increasingly becoming a concern and in the scope of what LCBP is looking at.

**Healthy Ecosystems**

*Figure 11. Landlocked Atlantic Salmon habitat access in Lake Champlain Tributaries*

- Vic commented on the use of the phrase "historic habitat" noting that salmon in Lake Champlain may have historically been sea run. The salmon stocked in Lake Champlain are from the Sebago Lake strain in Maine. Additional information and context might be warranted here.

#### *Figures 12- 14*

- Laura commented on the placement of the figure titles. There seems to be too much space between the titles and the actual figure, so it not always obvious they are associated. Putting them closer to the actual figure or above the figure might solve the problem,
- Walt was supportive of putting the titles on top of the figures, noting that figure 13's title is so far from the graph that he did not associate it with the graph at first.
- Walt noted this page is easier to digest than the previous page due to the balance of graphics and text, the previous page was more text heavy.

#### *Figure 15. First Detection of aquatic non-native and invasive species in Lake Champlain*

- Vic suggested including information on terrestrial invasive species that are in the basin. Mae Kate clarified that later in this section there is some text about terrestrial species and their impacts to habitat.
- Vic suggested a graph for terrestrial species introductions as well since they impact ecosystem services, health, and water quality. Mae Kate noted this could be a good candidate for an online resource if there is sufficient data availability.
- Katie suggested clarifying "aquatic species" in the graph's y axis or within the figure itself "non-native aquatic species" "aquatic invasive species."

#### *Figure 18. Waterbodies with aquatic invasive species visited prior to launch into Lake Champlain*

- Walt commented that this is an important figure. For the image next to the figure, he suggested an image with a boat that has some more visible zebra mussels or plant matter being removed to help make the connection of boats as vectors for invasive species.

#### **Thriving Communities**

- Laura suggested linking to leave no trace resources.

#### *Figure 20. Public beaches on Lake Champlain and conserved lands in its watershed*

- Walt suggested connecting with Lake George Land Conservancy as they have conserved more land this past year.

#### *Figure 21. State park and campground visitation*

- Vic suggested including data on town and local parks.

#### **Informed & Involved Public**

- Committee members asked if Stream Wise will be included somewhere in the report.

#### *Figure 22. Lake Champlain boat launch steward program summary, 2018-2020*

- Walt suggested including steward data from the Lake George Park Commission and the decontamination station at Exit 18 on the Adirondack Northway if it is not already included.

#### **General Comments on the Report**

- Walt was supportive of maintaining the same structure of the report as it is helpful to easily compare between editions and distributing flood information through the report as extreme precipitation events become more common under climate change.
- Vic shared he connected with a teacher who reaches natural resource conservation classes for BOCES. There is an opportunity for LCBP to connect with them and support their educational programming.

## 5. Updates

LCBP/CVNHP:

*Grants & RFPs*

- LCBP issued a flood recovery mini grant in August and awarded over \$45,000 to 8 organizations that were impacted by the July Flooding
- The following LCBP RFPs are open:
  - Clean Water and Healthy Ecosystems Planning and Implementation Projects proposals are due October 12th
  - Clean Water and Healthy Ecosystems Research Projects RFPs will open (hopefully this week) and are due November 10th
  - More information available at <https://www.lcbp.org/about-us/grants-rfps/request-for-proposals-rfps/>
- CVNHP Requests for Pre-proposals due October 9th  
<https://champlainvalleynhp.org/resources/grants/>
- Education & Outreach, organizational support, stream wise, and artist in residence grants will open later this fall
- Professional development mini grants and educator minigrants are ongoing and accept rolling applications

*CVNHP Summit*

- The CVNHP hosted its annual international summit at the Basin Harbor Club last week. The agenda featured a presentation about the Champlain-Adirondack Biosphere Network and the Spitfire and two knowledge cafes focused on the biosphere and the American Revolution.

NYSDEC:

- Included with the meeting follow-up materials.

BRASS:

- Conducted annual water quality testing at 18 sites and are tabulating those data for the headwaters, tributaries, and mainstem.
- Participated in the removal of some of the dams on the Saranac.
- Looking forward to comparing BRASS' data with NYSDEC's RIBS data on the Boquet.

CWICNY:

- CWICNY is hosting their annual North Country Stormwater Trade Show and Conference on October 19th. The conference will include presentations on the NYS Stream Manual, green stormwater infrastructure, and the anatomy of a stream restoration project. Professional engineering credits are available. More information is available at [https://www.cwicny.org/files/Tradeshow%20Flyer%202023%20\(8\\_14\).pdf](https://www.cwicny.org/files/Tradeshow%20Flyer%202023%20(8_14).pdf)

Walt will attend the Lake George Park Commission meeting this week which will include discussions about milfoil harvesting, the continuation of the mandatory septic inspection program, and the boat launch program.

## 6. Community Engagement Strategies – Katie Darr

LCBP is planning a Love the Lake presentation to take place in New York during the fall. Members provided suggestions for possible locations:

- Silver Bay YMCA
- Ticonderoga Community College
- Whallonsburg Grange
- Clinton Community College

In an effort to help the CAC learn more about other community groups' concerns and strengthen the CAC's connection to organizations with similar missions, Katie suggested setting aside time on upcoming agendas to spotlight different lakes associations or partners within the basin to learn more about their work and learn about any issues, concerns, priorities that the CAC might be able to feed up to LCBP or elected officials.

- Committee members supported this idea.

## **7. Meeting Wrap-up Discussion**

The next meeting is scheduled for **October 23<sup>rd</sup> from 1:00 - 3:00 pm via Zoom** and may feature a presentation about ADK Action's road salt reduction work.