

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

September 11th, 2023

5:00 – 7:00 pm

Approved Meeting Summary Meeting recording available [here](#)

Committee Members Present: Denise Smith (Chair), Eric Clifford, Wayne Elliot, Bob Fischer, Lori Fisher, Rep. Carol Ode, Hilary Solomon

Committee Members Absent: Mark Naud, Sen. Chris Bray, Sen. Randy Brock, Karina Dailey, Rep. Kari Dolan

LCBP Staff in Attendance: Katie Darr, Sarah Coleman (VTANR)

Public Guests: None

Meeting summary prepared by Katie Darr, Lake Champlain Basin Program

1. Welcome and Introductions – Denise Smith

2. Public Comments

No public comments were made.

3. ACTION ITEM: Review and vote on Draft July 25th meeting summary – Denise Smith

Motion to Approve by: Wayne Elliot

Second by: Hilary Solomon

Discussion on the motion: None.

Vote: All in favor

Abstentions: None

4. 2024 Action Plan Discussion & Work Session – Denise Smith

The committee reiterated support for the plan to make adjustments to the 2023 Action Plan including incorporating statistics from the July 2023 floods, emphasizing the need for resilience to support water quality and thriving communities, and clearly connecting the 2023 floods to the 2024 priorities. The committee walked through the 2023 document and discussed what elements are still relevant and accurate.

Companion document

- Denise introduced the possibility of creating a companion document later on with more specific legislative asks.
- Lori noted the committee's capacity as a volunteer body is a challenge for creating additional documents.
- Eric agreed with the capacity and timing challenges, especially as the CAC intends to meet with committee chairs in the Fall. The focus should be on cleaning up the existing action plan.
 - Bob and Denise agreed.
- Denise proposed adding additional, specific speaking points in lieu of a companion document.

Public Access and Recreation

- Hilary shared a Senator had reached out to her for follow-up about creating a State Park in the South Lake following the 2023 Action Plan presentation and asked what the CAC's role might be in that follow-up. This would require identifying an appropriate parcel of land for access and GIS work.

- Lori noted it would be good to outline the type of access the CAC would be looking for at a new park in the South Lake, prioritizing low impact recreation and swimming opportunities.
- Denise asked if there is access for motorized boats on the South Lake, but not low impact non-motorized watercraft. Hilary shared there is some private access for motorized vessels but there are not great access points in the South Lake.
- Wayne asked if there are any recent studies that have looked at this issue. Hilary was not aware of any, but The Nature Conservancy might have done some of this work.
- Lori suggested the CAC develop a series of questions that Katie and Sarah can follow up on with Forest Parks and Recreation including the State's priorities for determining new park sites on Lake Champlain and where that falls within their other priorities.
- Wayne added an appropriate legislative ask might be a feasibility study if there has not been much work on this issue recently. Lori noted that request should be informed with updated information from Forest Parks and Recreation.
- Rep. Ode suggested including a study to assess the impact of ATV trails on water quality. Bob was not sure this was an issue for the Lake Champlain Basin.
 - Sarah offered to gather some information about the State's trail erosion work. Lori asked if that could include follow up about ATV trails and where ATVs have legal access.

Agriculture

- Wayne asked for updates related to farming to determine whether or not anything in that section of the plan can be edited or shortened. Eric shared that due to the flooding, excess rains, and frost there is lots of money being pushed into the agricultural community. Although it's not enough to cover the losses, the perception from the general public may be that there is already a lot of money moving to agriculture this year.
- Bob asked if the Memorandum of Understanding between the Agency of Natural Resources and the Agency of Agriculture Farm and Markets is still an issue that needs to be carried forward in the 2024 action plan.
 - Lori shared that EPA is still doing their study and will release findings and recommendations in the future. EPA might make recommendations related to the MOU, but they do not have the authority to make that legislative change to shift enforcement from the Agency of Ag to Natural Resources. This is still a pertinent issue. It's not clear when the findings from EPA will be released, but they will be relevant to this issue and the CAC's request.
 - Hilary expressed interest in knowing what the Agency of Ag has been doing for enforcement following the floods.
 - Eric shared that during Secretary Tebbetts' last report out, the timeline for enforcement has changed for the better. It would be good to follow up to learn what those numbers are.

Flooding & Resilience

- Lori suggested making a strong statement at the top of the document about the 2023 floods connected to all of the priorities in the document.

Contaminants Pollution

- Wayne suggested focusing the language and the ask in the contaminants pollution section.

NEXT STEPS & ACTION ITEM: CAC members are asked to review and suggest edits to the Action Plan by September 22nd. Final edits and approval will take place at the October 9th meeting. Members should keep the following items in mind during their review:

- Are all of the priorities and requests still relevant?
- Are there areas where the language can be tightened?
- What statistics from the flooding would be valuable to include?
- Are there items that should be talking points instead of written in the plan?

Lori, Wayne, and Bob volunteered to be part of a small group with Denise to work on additional edits if needed prior to the October 9th meeting if needed.

Rep. Ode will share the preliminary priorities with the group working on climate resiliency legislation. Members were supportive of this.

Eric suggested a deadline for September 1, 2024 for the 2025 Action Plan to ensure it is ready to be used by committees and partners working on developing legislation. Bob and Denise agreed.

5. Meeting Wrap-Up Discussion – Denise Smith

The next meeting is scheduled for **October 9th from 5:00 – 7:00 pm via Zoom**. Members requested an update from the governor's office related to flood damage, long-term response, and how that is impacting the upcoming legislative session and budget. At this meeting, the action plan text will be finalized and approved. Rep. Ode requested a toxins presentation for a future meeting.