

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

September 10th, 2024

5:00 – 7:00 pm

Approved Meeting Summary

Committee Members Present: Karina Dailey (Vice Chair), Sen. Randy Brock, Eric Clifford, Bob Fischer, Lori Fisher, Andrew Milliken, Hilary Solomon, Alison Spasyk

Committee Members Absent: Denise Smith (Chair), Breck Bowden, Rep. Kari Dolan, Wayne Elliot, Sen. Martine Laroque Gulick, Rep. Carol Ode

LCBP Staff in Attendance: Katie Darr

Presenters: Mary Perchlik (VTDEC), Karina Dailey (VNRC)

Public Guests: Mark Naud

Meeting summary prepared by Katie Darr, Lake Champlain Basin Program

1. **Welcome and Introductions** (5 min) – Karina Dailey, Vice Chair

2. **Public Comments** (5 min) – Karina Dailey, Vice Chair

No public comments were made.

3. **ACTION ITEM:** Review and vote on Draft July 8th meeting summary (5 min) – Karina Dailey, Vice Chair

- Motion to approve the meeting summary by: Bob Fischer
- Second by: Andrew Milliken
- Discussion: None
- Abstentions: Lori Fisher, Hilary Solomon
- Vote: All in favor

4. **Update on VTCAC Reimbursement Process** – Mary Perchlik, Lake Champlain Basin Program Projects Specialist – VTDEC

Mary provided an update on the state reimbursement process for CAC per diems and expenses. If it has been longer than six months since you received a reimbursement payment, you will need to reach out to Stephanie Lanphear (802-793-0779, stephanie.lanphear@vermont.gov) at the Business Office to reactivate your account. Mary recommended submitting requests on a quarterly basis to keep accounts active. August – October reimbursement requests will be due to Katie due October 21st.

6. **Dam Removal and River Reconnection - A Nature Based Approach to Community Resilience** – Karina Dailey, Restoration Ecologist - Vermont Natural Resources Council

Karina provided an overview of the benefits of dam removal and VNRC's efforts to support this work. Her presentation is available with the meeting materials ([here](#)).

Discussion

- Andrew thanked Karina for her work and leadership. He asked if the Vermont Dam Taskforce gets involved with updating road stream crossings associated with a dam or separate from dam removals. Karina confirmed that the taskforce gets involved with road stream crossings associated with dam removals as they often involve culvert replacements and improvements.
- Andrew asked if historical conditions and flows are used as the baseline when planning for desired conditions post-dam removal or if there is a consideration of the expected increasing frequency and intensity of flood waters. Karina noted this is a question the group continues to think about. They are utilizing inundation mapping more and updating it where it's not available. Design practices should be updated based on increasing intense storms.
- Lori noted it was encouraging to see this work and the visuals shared in the presentation. She asked if there is a priority list of dams that tick all the boxes for ecological restoration and where we are on that list. Karina confirmed there the VT Dam Taskforce has an internal list of priorities ranging from active remove, identified project but not moving, ecological priority rankings, safety. Some dams have high ecological priority for fish passage but not necessarily dam safety. In 2017, TNC created a dam screening tool for the Lake Champlain Basin portion of Vermont and the taskforce is looking for funds to update that list to better incorporate flood resiliency and updated modeling.

6. 2025 Lake Champlain Action Plan Drafting – Karina Dailey, VTCAC Vice Chair

The committee reviewed the latest draft of the action plan and discussed additional edits.

Content Discussion

- Mark noted that Act 250 is still so new, there will be many questions about what it means and what the impacts of implementation might be over the next 6 – 8 months. For action plan prioritization, Act 250 issues might not be as relevant unless it's a placeholder to the next legislative session.
- Mark shared insights from Dr. Lesley-Ann L. Dupigny-Giroux's FNLC climate change presentation. In 1920 and 2023, flooding impact was prevalent along roads. There is not enough money to deal with these impacts unless we move towards restoring floodplains and removing dams.
- Mark provided a summary of the Lake George Septic Inspection Program presentation shared at the 9/10 LCBP Steering Committee meeting. The Lake George Park Commission is implementing a mandatory inspection for systems within 500 feet of Lake George. There are 2500 parcels within this zone and they are conducting 500 inspections every year over the next 5 years. They have a full time staff person to monitor the inspections. The program is in its second year, 23% of systems have failed and 15% were substandard or did not meet design parameters to function for their current use. They noted challenges of where the septage goes and what haulers will do with it. This was concerning for Vermont, as we have not received meaningful information from ANR about septic systems along the lake. It might be worthwhile for the CAC to think about requesting a similar program in Vermont and looking for updated information about septic systems within a certain distance of waterbodies. With high water levels, it is unlikely many of these systems are functioning. He recommended septic be a priority in the action plan or as an LCBP line item as it ties into meeting TMDL goals. He noted Secretary Moore seemed concerned about Lake George's results and may be receptive to this.
 - Lori echoed Mark's comments about septic. The information we have available in Vermont is dated and not comprehensive. Given Lake George's findings, the CAC should consider advancing a study or action related to this.
 - Andrew asked if this study would be zoomed in on septic systems near the lake or an analysis of systems and prioritization of where additional focus is needed.
 - Mark added that NYSDEC has a database system that shows all parcels within a few hundred feet of a water body. The CAC has asked for that information on the Vermont side of the basin but has not received follow up on that. The database analysis would be a start and help direct priority areas. This could be a potential research priority for the TAC.
 - Mary shared that there are 2 years of line item funding for the Wastewater Program at DEC through the LCBP including a training series for installers and designers and maintainers of wastewater systems ongoing through contract with Vermont state colleges and a research project on installing wastewater systems in clay loam soils. There is interest in the

Wastewater Program in pursuing a lot of the septic database questions including creating data layer of the known permits and systems. She thought this would be priority for FFY25, it would be great for the CAC to support them in that request and what they're hoping to accomplish.

- Bob added that haulers are supposed to keep records of where they pump out which could provide good data to the first data layer of permitted systems.
- Mark added that of the failed systems in Lake George, 30% were cesspools which would not be permitted
- Lori shared an update on the VNRC, LCC, and CLF petition (more information [here](#) and EPA letter to ANR [here](#)). ANR is required by EPA to come up with a corrective action document in 90 days, there will likely be a legislative component the CAC should stay on top of.
- The committee discussed the desired length of the document, noting it is running longer than the 2-page document from the last several years.
 - Lori noted that some of the information will need to be included as supporting talking points if they are not included in the document text.
 - Andrew suggested supporting documents or appendices to provide more details on each issue.

7. Meeting Wrap-Up Discussion

The VTCAC is scheduled to meet next October 7th from 5-7pm and the agenda will focus on finalizing the action plan text.