

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

Monday, June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
1:00 – 3:00 pm  
Silver Bay YMCA

## Approved Meeting Summary

Members Present: Walt Lender (Chair), Jackie Bowen, James C. Dawson, Tom Metz, Vic Putman

Members absent: Laura Klaiber, Jane Gregware, Ricky Laurin, Steve Kramer, Colin Powers, Charlotte Staats, Fred Woodward

Public Guests: Ahren Von Schnell (Congresswoman Stefanik's Office), Garrett Lemza (Congresswoman Stefanik's Office), Connie Mandeville (Chief of Staff for Assemblyman Billy Jones), Matt McDonald (Chief of Staff for Assemblyman Simpson)

Presenters: Dave Hatin (Lake George Park Commission), Erin Vennie-Vollrath (NYSDEC), Mae Kate Campbell (LCBP), Sue Hagar (LCBP)

LCBP Staff: Katie Darr, Beth Whitmore-Stolar (NYSDEC)

Meeting summary prepared by Katie Darr, Lake Champlain Basin Program

### 1:00 – 1:15 pm

1. **Welcome and Introductions** (5 min) – Walt Lender, Chair
2. **Public Comments** (5 min)

No public comments were made.

3. **ACTION ITEM:** Review and vote on Draft May 20<sup>th</sup> meeting summary (5 min) – Walt Lender, Chair  
There was not a quorum present to vote. This item has been moved to the next meeting's agenda.

### 1:15 – 1:50 pm

4. **Lake George Septic Inspection Program Update** – Dave Hatin, Lake George Park Commission

Dave provided an update on the first full year of the septic inspection program. His presentation is available with the meeting materials ([here](#)). The [septic inspection program website](#) is updated regularly. In 2023, 46% of inspected systems passes, 16% were in need of repair, 15% were substandard, and 23% failed. Following inspection, the Lake George Park Commission provides a letter to the landowner advising them of system status and next steps. The local authority of jurisdiction is responsible for enforcement. Challenges for the program include lack of engineering capacity to rectify substandard and failed systems, increased travel to unload sewage, and enforcement. Some haulers are traveling as far as Albany to unload, local wastewater treatment facilities do not have the capacity to deal with the increased load. They anticipate it will take 1 to 2 years to replace failed systems due to contractor availability.

### *Discussion*

- Tom asked how the Queensbury inspection program differed from the Lake George program. Dave clarified that Queensbury only inspected systems within the waterfront residential zone. The Lake George program inspects all systems within 500 feet of the lake.

- Tom asked if Dave expects the failure rate to decrease as the program continues. Dave noted that the lake is broken into 5 different regions and there is a lottery system to determine which systems in the region will be inspected each year. He anticipates after the first 5 years there will be more passing systems due to the upgrades.
- Jim commented on the median property size of 8/10ths of an acre, noting that more than half of the lots must be smaller than that so there must be lots that are too small for a septic system. Dave expects to see more community septic systems and sewage districts.
- Matt asked how many systems have been successfully remediated from 2023. Dave did not yet have that data. A full time position has been created for follow up on the program. There is a lot of work being done, but engineering capacity is the limiting factor.
- Matt asked if there is a penalty if issues are not remediated within 6 months. Dave shared there is not as long as there is ongoing effort to work towards the necessary upgrades.
- Walt noted that the data being collected through this program is hugely valuable to any other lake community and provides important data for communities looking into mandatory inspections.
- Jackie commented on the previous year's issue of landowners not being ready when inspectors showed up and asked if that is still an issue. Dave confirmed that the haulers and landowners have been trained on what they need to do ahead of time including digging up the septic outlets/inlets. There is one hauler that waits until the inspectors arrive.
- Walt asked what is being done for people who don't know where all of the system components are on their property. Dave shared that most haulers have cameras that can fish through the pipes and go down into the field from the septic system. It is an additional cost to homeowners but it speeds up the process.
- Vic asked if the costs for replacements/upgrades were being tracked. Dave noted that is not something LGPC is tracking right now as local jurisdictions have the authority. LGPC just gets final documents about the work completed. He commented that there are challenges with people who have lived in Lake George for generations and can't afford to fix the issues.
- Vic asked if stormwater was being considered. Walt shared that there is a lakewide stormwater regulation on Lake George. Some municipalities choose to enforce it themselves, LGPC enforces it in other areas. These regulations are more stringent than the DEC regulations.

### **1:50 pm – 2:05 pm**

#### **5. NY Lake Champlain Lake Wise Info Sheets – Erin Vennie-Vollrath, Lake Champlain Basin Coordinator, NYSDEC**

Erin provided an overview of the New York Lake Champlain Lake Wise Information Sheets. Her presentation is available [here](#). This project started in 2022 with funding from the Lake Champlain Basin Program working with Greenleaf Designs who works with the Vermont Lake Wise Program. These information sheets are targeted towards lakeshore landowners and managers with the goal to share lake-friendly shoreline practices. There will be 24 information sheets, but not all will be made public initially. They are being finalized and will be posted on the [NYSDEC Lake Champlain Watershed webpage](#). As a follow up to this effort, NYSDEC has requested LCBP funds to support a pilot Lake Wise Program in New York which would be similar to Stream Wise and involve reaching out to landowners and identifying opportunities to improve lake friendly shoreline practices.

#### *Discussion:*

- Tom noted that garlic mustard is listed as a perennial but is a biennial.

- Jackie asked if there has been engagement with the Amish community around lake-friendly practices. Erin noted that there have been discussions about how to engage the Amish community around farming practices, but not specific to lake-friendly practices. A few Soil and Water Conservation Districts have tried to do outreach with them, but she was not sure how successful they had been.
  - Sue added that they are very private and selective about who is let into the community especially if they perceive it to be a government program. Many of the Soil and Water Conservation Districts are led by women which is at odds with their patriarchal society.
  - Jackie agreed this will require slow building relationships and likely anthropologist involvement but there is a need to bridge the gap between communities.
  - Vic added USFWS has run into this issue on the Boquet River as they are proposing to do lamprey control with TFN. It is known that a lot of the Amish community use the river as a water source. They are not sure how many will be affected, but are looking at door to door opportunities to get them water.
- Walt asked how the information sheets will be distributed. Erin shared they will be posted on the website to start.
- Katie added that these sound like a great product to include in a New York Lake Champlain Resource Room.

## **2:05 – 2:20 pm**

### **6. Fishing Education Workshops: Equity Access Initiative** – Mae Kate Campbell, Associate Scientist, and Sue Hagar, Education and Outreach Specialist, LCBP

Mae Kate and Sue provided an overview of the fishing workshops that take place in New York and Vermont in collaboration with Lake Champlain Sea Grant, NYSDEC, and Vermont Fish and Wildlife. The presentation is available [here](#). In Vermont, the programs have targeted New American communities. In New York, the focus has generally been on low-income populations. Participants receive a free fishing license, pole, fishing instruction, and meet with an Environmental Conservation Officer. Mae Kate also spoke about the [recreating safely resources](#) that have been translated into 7 languages.

#### *Discussion*

- Jackie asked how long the resource translation process took. Mae Kate noted it was a 2-year, multi-faceted process. First involving identification of topics that were important to communities, putting the information together in English, getting feedback from community leaders, working with a videographer to create a storyboard, bringing that back to community leaders to ensure it was being communicated and presented in a way that resonated with their communities, and final development and translation. These resources extend the reach of information beyond the people that can participate in the fishing workshops.
- Tom asked if Plattsburgh Cares has been involved. He also suggested getting a brochure or poster into naturalization ceremonies as a potential avenue to engage New Americans on the New York side or at food shelves. Sue shared that Aude Lockett at Sea Grant has been leading promotion of the New York program.

## **2:20 – 2:40 pm**

### **7. LCBP FY25 Research Priorities Discussion** – Mae Kate Campbell, Associate Scientist, LCBP

Mae Kate led the committee in a discussion to identify topics of interest or concern for LCBP to include as FY25 research priorities. The Lake Champlain Basin Program Executive Committee has asked Steering Committee members to work with their constituents to identify research needs to support management in the basin. Suggested topics included recreation access and microplastics. There were other topics suggested, unfortunately there was an issue with the document syncing and that portion of the notes was lost.

**Next Steps:** Send Katie any additional research priorities **by August 15<sup>th</sup>**. The Technical Advisory Committee will discuss the priorities at their September meeting.

## 2:40 – 2:50 pm

### 8. Updates

#### *Assemblyman Billy Jones' Office*

- Connie shared that she is working with folks in Champlain to start the process of dredging the Chazy River which hasn't happened since the 1990s. They are looking at different funding sources to support that work.

#### *BRASS*

- BRASS planted 1,400 trees along the river during their tree planting event. They hosted a river clean up in June in partnership with NYSDEC.

#### *LCBP*

- The Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership Summit is September 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> in Saint Jean Sur Richelieu.
- The water quality monitoring buoys have been deployed.
- LCBP is hiring a new clean water staff position and a resource room coordinator.
- LCBP is in early phases of RFP launch, visit <https://www.lcbp.org/about-us/grants-rfps/request-for-proposals-rfps/>. The Artist-in-Residence Program is accepting applications.

#### *NYSDEC*

- Beth Whitmore-Stolar is the new Aquatic Invasive Species Outreach Specialist. She will focus on aquatic invasive species outreach to communities and partners along the canal with a focus on round goby.
- NYSDEC has a few different water quality grants open including the WQIP implementation grants and planning grants.

#### *Other Updates*

- Jim reported the fishing derbies have begun. He attended the State of the Lake kick off event at the LCBP Office.
- Tom commented on the Champlain Hudson Power Express work, they are working closer to shore than he expected. He asked if anyone from LCBP had coordinated with the power company, expressing concern about the Spitfire. Mae Kate shared that Meg Modley has been involved with some elements in coordination with the power authority and knows that the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum was involved with the cultural and environmental impact review.
  - Katie is working on securing a presentation about the power line work for the CACs.

## 2:50 – 3:00 pm

### 9. Meeting Wrap Up – Walt Lender, Chair & Katie Darr (LCBP)

The next NYCAC meeting is scheduled for **September 30<sup>th</sup>**.