



FOCUS 2025

*For a thriving
Lake Champlain Basin*

New York Citizens Advisory Committee on Lake Champlain Management

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Have a question for
the NYCAC,
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participating or
learning more?
Scan the QR code
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more information.



The Lake Champlain Basin

Who We Are

The New York Citizens Advisory Committee (NYCAC) on Lake Champlain Management is a voice of the New York public on Lake Champlain Basin issues. It serves as a forum to discuss concerns, improve understanding, and explore solutions to enhance the basin's resources and water quality. The NYCAC collaborates with communities and organizations such as the Lake Champlain Basin Program, Champlain Watershed Improvement Coalition of New York, Boquet River Association, Champlain-Adirondack Biosphere Network, the Vermont and Quebec Citizens Advisory Committees, and others. It promotes two-way communication between communities, scientists, decision-makers, and local governments.

The Lake Champlain Basin boasts abundant natural and cultural treasures of global distinction as an internationally recognized biosphere region. The upcoming 250th anniversary of the American Revolution in 2026 presents an opportunity to reflect on its history, environment, and long-term stewardship of working lands. Residents and visitors alike enjoy diverse recreational activities, from boating and fishing to admiring scenic views. Preserving clean water and robust ecosystems is vital for thriving communities. FOCUS 2025 highlights the NYCAC's priority concerns and recommendations to sustain Lake Champlain's environmental, economic, and cultural benefits in light of a changing climate.

2025 NYCAC FOCUS AREAS

- Assess, Mitigate, and Eliminate Chemical Contaminants
- Support Habitat Protection, Connectivity, and Wildlife Corridors
- Invest in Critical Water Infrastructure for Resilience
- Prevent the Spread of Invasive Species
- Reduce Phosphorus Loading

Assess, Mitigate, and Eliminate Chemical Contaminants

Chemical contaminants threaten human health and the environment. Chloride pollution harms infrastructure, drinking water, and wildlife. Reducing road salt application through safe de-icing and winter road management best practices lowers pollution and costs, especially as winter rain events increase. Proactive assessment and mitigation are essential for public health and sustainability.

FOCUS Resources on:

- *Implementing the Road Salt Reduction Task Force Report recommendations*
- *Incentivizing safe de-icing and winter road management best practices among public and private applicators*
- *Assessing contaminant pollution, including PFAS and pesticides, to inform mitigation strategies in ground and surface water*



Scan the QR code to learn more about the impacts of road salt and ways to safely reduce its use.

Support Habitat Protection, Connectivity, and Wildlife Corridors

Wetland degradation, floodplain development, removal of hedgerows and riparian growth, roads, and dams impact wildlife and communities. Habitat damage results in impaired wildlife and fish movement and reduced ecological diversity. Impacts on public safety and communities include reduced resilience to storms and increased damages to property and infrastructure. Protecting wildlife habitats and connectivity is especially important for listed species, like wood turtles, and emblematic species of the Adirondacks experiencing population decline including salmon and brook trout. Improving aquatic and terrestrial connectivity through mechanisms such as right-sizing culverts and removing dams where appropriate, restores habitats, reduces erosion and nutrient loading, and enhances flood resilience.

FOCUS Resources on:

- *Protecting and restoring wetlands and floodplains*
- *Restoring connectivity via right-sizing of culverts, dam removals, and wildlife overpasses where appropriate*
- *Implementing education and outreach on the value of wetlands, floodplains, and connected habitats*

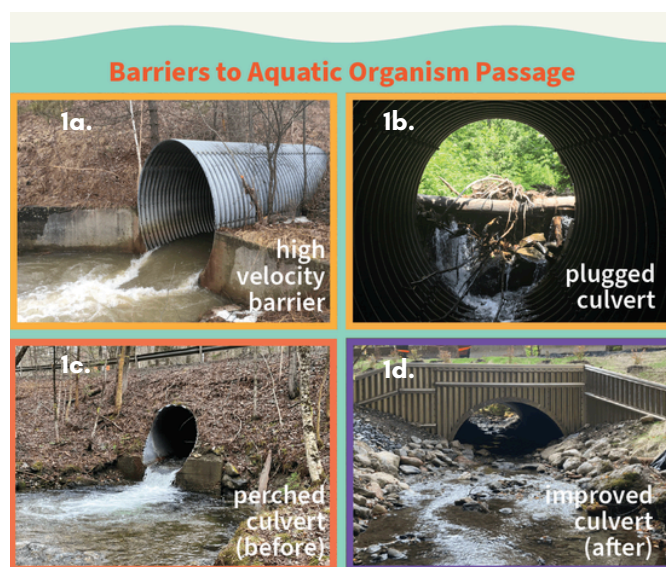


Figure 1a., 1b., 1c. Barriers to aquatic organism passage. Figure 1d. Improved culvert allowing for aquatic organism passage (adapted from the Lake Champlain Basin Program's 2024 State of the Lake Report Figure 13).



Juvenile Atlantic Salmon

Invest in Critical Water Infrastructure for Resilience

Upgrading and maintaining critical water infrastructure is essential to reaching clean water goals and supporting thriving communities in the region. Failing systems impact public health, tourism and recreation, wildlife, and the economy. The USGS Stream Gage Network provides essential climate and flood data, yet limited monitoring in New York puts people and property at risk. Maintenance and expansion of the Stream Gage Network, combined with green infrastructure initiatives and maintenance and enhancement of nature-based solutions like wetlands, enhances resilience and mitigates risks to communities and the environment.

FOCUS Resources on:

- *Upgrading and maintaining wastewater treatment facilities, sewer, and septic systems*
- *Promoting public implementation of septic maintenance best practices across the Lake Champlain Basin*
- *Maintaining and expanding the USGS Stream Gage Network*
- *Implementing green infrastructure and nature-based solutions*



Scan the QR code to learn more about the Lake Champlain Lake George Regional Planning Board's Septic Smart campaign and septic management.

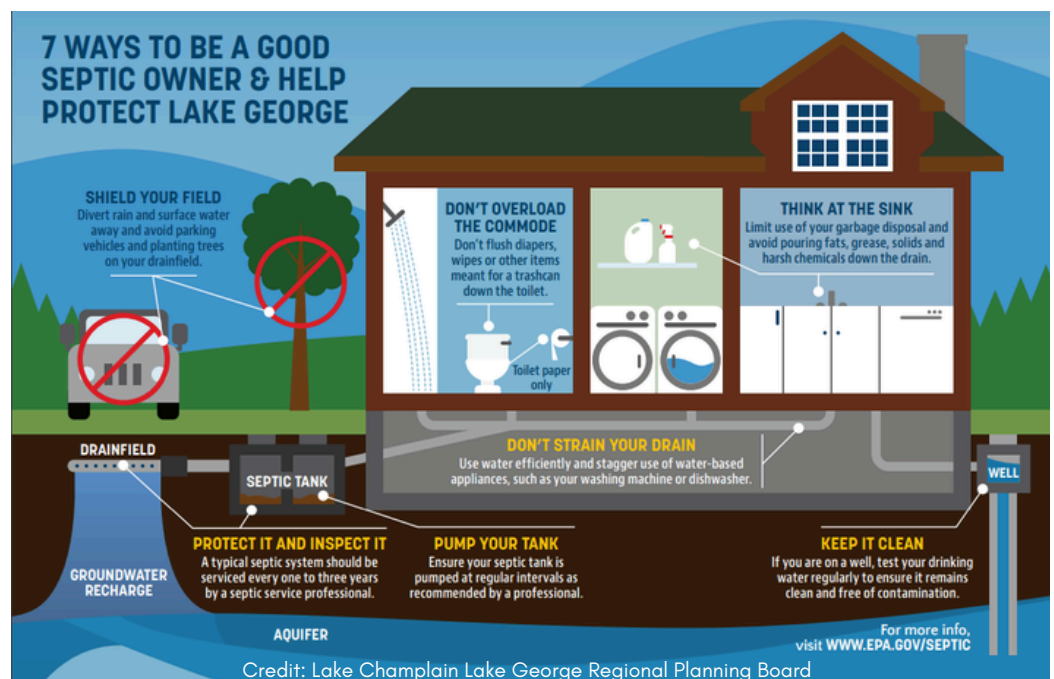


Figure 2. Lake Champlain Lake George Regional Planning Board's 2022 Septic Smart campaign communicated septic best practices to homeowners and short term rental owners.

Prevent the Spread of Invasive Species

Invasive species significantly threaten Lake Champlain's ecology and economy. Once introduced, they are costly and difficult to manage and negatively impact native ecosystems, water quality, and various economic sectors. Climate change can intensify the impact of invasive species, expanding the range of species like Japanese Knotweed northward. With 52 known non-native and invasive aquatic species in Lake Champlain, New York State must allocate resources to prevent further introductions and manage existing threats in cooperation with Vermont and Quebec.

FOCUS Resources on:

- *Implementing a physical separation barrier in the Champlain Canal*
- *Improving invasive species education, outreach, and monitoring opportunities for anglers, recreationists, boaters, and canal users*
- *Sustaining aggressive water chestnut harvesting, sea lamprey control, and invasive species monitoring programs*
- *Expanding boat launch steward and boat wash programs*

Runoff from non-point sources like agriculture, urban areas, roads, ditches and eroding streambanks as well as point source discharges from wastewater treatment plants add nutrients to the lake. There is a need to better understand and quantify how winter nutrient loading impacts Lake Champlain. Excess phosphorus degrades water quality, causes harmful algal blooms, and disrupts aquatic ecosystems, water supplies, and recreation. These impacts are exacerbated by climate change with warmer waters triggering the release of legacy phosphorus from lake sediment (Figure 3). Addressing phosphorus loading from both nonpoint and point sources is vital to restoring and protecting Lake Champlain's health.

FOCUS Resources on:

- *Implementing best management practices in all nonpoint source categories*
- *Optimizing best treatment technology at wastewater treatment plants*
- *Promoting practices that reduce phosphorus loading from communities, such as using phosphorus-free fertilizers, maintaining taller grass, redirecting downspouts, installing rain barrels, and preserving woody streambank buffers*

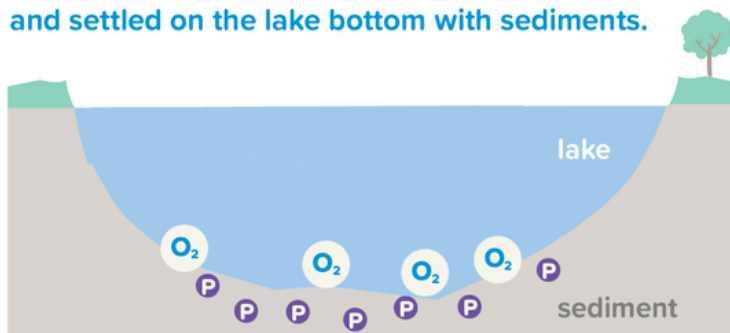


Credit: Lake Champlain Basin Program

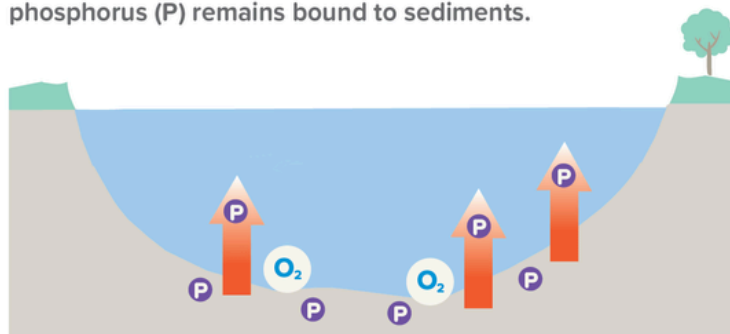
Vegetated woody buffers foster stream health and resiliency throughout the Lake Champlain basin

Release of Legacy Phosphorus in Lakes

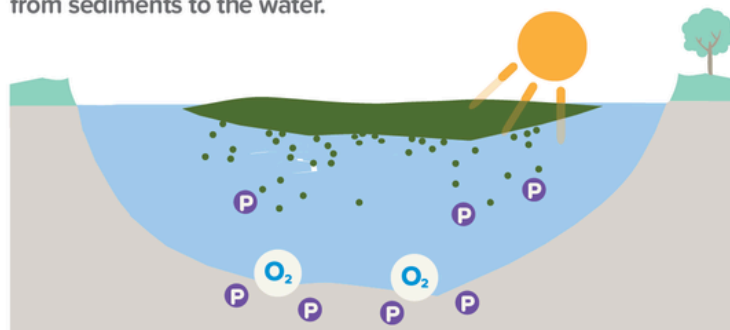
For decades, phosphorus from human activities on the landscape has been delivered by rivers and settled on the lake bottom with sediments.



If oxygen (O₂) is plentiful in water at the lake bottom, legacy phosphorus (P) remains bound to sediments.



When oxygen levels decrease at the lake bottom due to biological activity and calm conditions, legacy phosphorus can be released from sediments to the water.



In shallow areas, cyanobacteria blooms can form where sunlight and released legacy phosphorus fuel growth.



Figure 3. Description of the release of legacy phosphorus and its impact in lakes.

Source: Lake Champlain Basin Program



Scan the QR code to learn more about what you can do in your community to reduce phosphorus loading and pollution into Lake Champlain.