



Lake Champlain Executive Committee

FINAL Meeting Minutes

February 12, 2026 9:30AM – 12:00PM

Virtual via Microsoft Teams

ATTENDANCE:

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Bryan Dore (Chair, EPA R1), Julie Moore (VTANR), Yuan Zeng for Joe Zalewski (Chair, NYS DEC), Pierre Leduc (Chair, Quebec CAC), Karina Dailey (Chair, VT CAC), Buzz Hoerr (Chair, E&O Committee), Susan Evans McClure (Chair, HAPAC), Neil Kamman (Chair, TAC), Susan Sullivan (NEIWPCC), Laura DiPietro (VT AAFM for Alyson Eastman), Antony Tseng (EPA R2), Michele Fafette (EPA R2), Karyn Hanson (NYSDEC)

STAFF: LCBP: Eric Howe, Mae Kate Campbell, Kerry Crowningshield, Lauren Jenness, Elizabeth Lee, Meg Modley Gilbertson, Matthew Vaughan, Sonya Vogel, Jim Brangan, Anna Vold, Emma Dannenberg; Erin Vennie-Vollrath (LCBP NY Coordinator NYS DEC), Sarah Coleman (VT ANR), Sarita Croce (NEIWPCC), Emily Bird (VT ANR)

GUESTS: Rebecca Ellis (Sen. Welch's Office)

Arrival, Teleconference and webinar open, networking **9:30 AM**

MEETING BEGINS **9:45 AM**

INTRODUCTIONS: Bryan Dore, EPA Region 1, Chaired the meeting. He began the meeting with a round of introductions

Approval of Summary of previous meeting

ACTION ITEM: Approve Meeting Minutes from **January 22, 2026**, Executive Committee Meeting

- Motion By: Neil Kamman
- Second by: Buzz Hoerr
- Discussion on the motion: none
- Vote: All in favor
- Abstentions: none

PUBLIC COMMENT **9:55 AM**

No members of the public were present.

CONGRESSIONAL UPDATES

10:00 AM

- Rebecca Ellis (Sen. Welch) : Shared that congress has passed 11 of the 12 appropriations bills, still discussing homeland security. All Lake Champlain-related programs are funded:
 - \$25.5M EPA Section 120
 - GLFC \$10.0M for Lake Champlain and \$0.5M for the Lake Memphremagog fishery.
 - \$2M to USDA-NRCS to complete feasibility study for SnoTel (snow monitoring telemetry instrumentation)
 - \$500,000 went to the USACE for a Winooski Flood study
 - Not clear on status of AIS/Water chestnut funding in USACE; an extra \$500,000 was added to EPA Section 120, so those funds may be there to cover the USACE gap for water chestnut management.
 - Yesterday there was a bipartisan, bicameral bill introduced: Lake Champlain Enhancement Act, which would authorize a 5-year extension of Section 120, adds a section requiring a 5-year review of the LCBP fiscal agent, and language authorizing the Great Lakes Fishery Commission to formally conduct work in the Lake Champlain basin.

DISTRIBUTION OF LCBP AWARDS OVER THE PAST YEAR

- In response to Executive Committee interest in understanding how grants are distributed across the basin, Matt, Kerry, and Lauren presented an analysis titled “Geographic Distribution of Recent LCBP and CVNHP Awards” in which responses to RFPs and grant awards during calendar year 2025 were assessed. During that time period, 374 proposals were submitted in response to RFPs and 229 awards were made, totaling \$22 million awarded out of \$38.5 million requested. By jurisdiction, New York received 80 of 126 proposals funded (\$8.3M of \$13.5M requested), Vermont received 141 of 236 (\$13.4M of \$23.5M requested), and Quebec received 7 of 16 (\$314,000). Overall, the distribution of awards closely reflects the spatial distribution of the basin.
- Committee members noted that the funding distribution appears defensible and balanced across the watershed. However, discussion highlighted factors influencing participation and success rates, including fewer proposals from New York partners, eligibility limits tied to U.S. funding sources, organizational capacity differences across the basin, and language and awareness barriers in Quebec. It was also noted that Quebec’s small population and limited number of eligible organizations can significantly affect results in a small dataset, and participation may vary across years.

IIJA FUNDING REVIEW -

PRIORITIES AND PROGRAMS FUNDED FROM FY22-FY25

Eric noted that he had planned to present a four-year summary of IIJA-funded projects, but was unable to complete it due to recent illness and other time constraints. He will prepare a more

complete presentation for the April Steering Committee meeting. In the meantime, Eric, Meg, and Matt drafted a brief update summarizing the current IIJA program status, and Eric shared a budget overview and the amount of funding currently obligated.

Committee members then discussed the Tree Nursery program and regional demand for native plant stock. Neil asked whether there is sufficient demand to justify continued investment, including support for private nursery capacity. Meg explained that partners report about 70% of nursery stock used in the basin is still imported from outside the region, indicating a strong need to expand local production. Recent grants are helping establish capacity, with many projects led by nonprofits and educational institutions, and new efforts emerging in watersheds such as the Mad River and Missisquoi. Many initiatives focus on infrastructure improvements, seed collection, and developing business plans to support long-term nursery operations.

Meg and others noted growing collaboration among partners, including organizations collecting native seeds locally and coordinating to fill species gaps (such as oaks) and expand native plant availability. Karina and others observed that the funding is already translating into more native plants available through regional nurseries, though there are concerns about sustaining coordination capacity as some partnership funding expires. Several members emphasized the importance of maintaining this network and continuing to assess demand. Eric noted that additional information may come from an upcoming conference and the closing of the current RFP, with funding decisions expected in March. Further discussion will continue at the April meeting.

DRAFT FY2026 LCBP/CVNHP BUDGET:

10:15 AM

FY2026 IIJA Priorities (Final Year)

- Per the discussion in the previous agenda item, the following breakdown of IIJA funds is proposed for the FY2026 IIJA budget:
 - IIJA Staff support: \$195,000 for three years (0.5 FTE)
 - AOP Implementation staff support: \$510,000 for three years (1.0 FTE)
 - AOP Projects: \$2,822,000
 - Land Conservation, Round 3: \$2,415,000
 - Tree Nursery Support, Round 4: \$795,000
 - AIS Management, Round 4: \$250,000

FY2026 TMDL Priorities request - New York and Vermont New York

- Erin presented New York's funding request of \$5.4 million to support implementation of the 2024 Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) developed by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. The proposal includes \$5 million for nonpoint source phosphorus reduction projects across the agricultural, forestry, and urban sectors, with the remaining \$400,000 to support a three-year engineering position to assist with project design, permitting, and evaluation.

- Projects for TMDL implementation are already identified within the WIP and would be implemented through partnerships with New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and Champlain Watershed Improvement Coalition of New York (CWICNY). Funding would prioritize high-priority subwatersheds with the greatest phosphorus reduction potential, with administrative costs capped at 10%. The plan excludes septic and wastewater projects because other funding programs are available for those sectors.
- The proposed engineering position responds to an identified gap in technical capacity needed to advance TMDL-related projects. The engineer would likely work closely with the CWICNY watershed coordinator to support project implementation. Committee members noted there is precedent for supporting externally hosted positions through program funding.
- The discussion also touched on opportunities for co-funding engineering capacity with federal partners, such as Natural Resources Conservation Service. Erin clarified that the request is intended as a one-time, three-year investment. Erin also clarified that the State plans to focus its FY26 request specifically on TMDL implementation rather than broader package of State funding line item requests this year. Committee members acknowledged the importance of building technical capacity among watershed partners to successfully implement projects on the ground.

Vermont

- Sarah Coleman shared that Vermont has largely same request from last year – to support 3-acre stormwater projects and MS4 communities, and as much work as we can support in the regulatory stormwater space. Requesting \$5 million for this piece, which includes \$4.5 million available for design and implementation of projects.
- The second project Vermont is proposing is continued support for the Enhanced Agriculture Practice implementation program, which is a continuation of support for the farm agronomic practice program, engineering services, TA, BMPs, and CREP. This request is for \$3 million.

The Committee moved into Executive Session to consider FY2026 budget proposals and grant awards.

ACTION ITEM: Motion to enter into Executive Session

- Motion By: Buzz Hoerr
- Second by: Neil Kamman
- Discussion on the motion: none
- Vote: All in favor
- Abstentions: none

EXECUTIVE SESSION

11:15 AM

Exit Executive Session

Open Session:

ACTION ITEM: Approval to advance the Record of Decision for CVNHP Full Proposals (FY2026 NPS, GLFC) Grants to the April 2026 Steering Committee meeting for consideration in the FY2026 LCBP-CVNHP budget

- Motion by: Neil Kamman
- Second by: Susan Evans McClure
- Discussion on the motion: none
- Vote: all in favor
- Abstentions: none

ACTION ITEM: Approval of the Record of Decision for FY25 Organizational Support Grants

- Motion by: Susan Evans McClure
- Second by: Karina Dailey
- Discussion on the motion: None
- Vote: All in favor
- Abstentions: None

ACTION ITEM: Motion to approve the Record of Decision as amended by the Executive Committee for the Land Conservation (IIJA) grant program Round 2

- Motion by: Julie Moore
- Second by: Buzz Hoerr
- Discussion on the motion: Julie confirmed that the Committee discussed not supporting Project 6 in the original Record of Decision, and supporting projects 1-5 and 7 for awards.
- Vote: All in favor, except EPA Region 2
- Opposed: EPA R2 (Antony)
- Abstentions: None

ADJOURN

12:30 PM