

Lake Champlain Basin Program  
**Steering Committee Meeting**  
Wednesday September 18, 2013  
*Cote d'Ardoise in Dunham, Quebec*

Approved Minutes

**Members:** Daniel Leblanc, Bob Stegemann, David Mears, Buzz Hoerr, Ron Jackson, Louis Hak, Gina Campoli, Breck Bowden, Mike Winslow, Chuck Ross, Vicky Drew, Jan Surface, Dave Tilton, Catherine Brooks; *Via phone:* James Ehlers, Mark Hohengasser, Mario Paula, Jeanne Voorhees, Mike Latham, Tom Berry. **Staff:** Bill, Jim, Colleen, Ryan, Elizabeth, Eric, Stephanie, Kathy, Michaela, Fred, Martin, Clair, Meg (via phone)  
**Guests:** Laura DiPietro, Kari Dolan

The meeting began at 10:30 AM, chaired by Daniel Leblanc

***ACTION ITEM:*** *The June, 2013 meeting minutes approval was moved by Ron and seconded by Dave, subject to correction of some typographical errors. The motion passed by unanimous vote.*

**Public Comments** None

**Brief Updates** written updates were circulated.

- **NY:** Bob reported that Gov. Cuomo has announced \$45M in water quality grants throughout the North Country. A mandatory boat inspection program has been proposed by the Lake George Park Commission. Asian clam in Lake George continues to be a growing problem, and the northern part of the lake has them now. The LCBP agronomist position operating effectively. The NYS Canal Corporation continues to take steps towards a feasibility study for a barrier on the Champlain Canal. Bob said the work is expected to be done on the Saranac River dam, which will be lowered to maintain fish barrier and fish passage.
- **VT:** David reported that VT is focused on the developing TMDL. The administration is considering what proposals will be put forward to EPA to reduce phosphorus loading to the levels required to meet concentration targets. One major issue is to determine the best balance between sewage treatment plant point source load and the nonpoint load, and what related regulations may be required. The program moves into a more active public phase in mid to late October for 4-6 weeks.
- **QC:** Daniel reported on the fish lamprey barrier on Morpion Stream which is under construction. He noted that Quebec is evaluating the Flood Report recommendations LCBP forwarded to the Prime Minister, and hopes to have a response about these recommendations by February, 2014. A recent publication described water quality trends in the last decade for the 10 watersheds suffering most from nonpoint source pollution in Quebec. Daniel also described a recent study of acute health effects in relation to exposure to cyanobacteria toxins.
- **Federal Partners:** Dave T. reported on a meeting of partners yesterday. Work continues on the MOU between the different agencies; most of the signatures have been obtained. The group is planning a kiosk probably located at the Leahy Center in Burlington, to have a video that shows how the agencies work together for Lake Champlain. Sea lamprey control treatments are scheduled for the Saranac River today.

**Advisory Committee Reports**

- **NY CAC:** Ron reported that on October 1st there will be a Champlain Hudson power express public information meeting at the Plattsburgh, North Country Chamber office at 1 pm. The discovery center

workgroup has been meeting to continue developing conceptual ideas for a cornerstone facility to be located along the Plattsburgh waterfront as part of a larger Destination Master Planning process. A welcome home party is planned for the Lois McClure by NYCAC, in Plattsburgh, on October 1st.

- **VT CAC:** James reported that the CAC has two new members: Denise Smith and Alex McDonald. The committee has had 2 recent meetings, including an all day retreat about updating the enabling legislation.
- **QC CAC:** Martin reported that there are municipal elections coming up. The Action Plan for boat launch activities has been discussed by mayors. Martin said a meeting will be held in Bedford with the CAC soon.
  - **TAC:** Mike W reported that the TAC met in September and had an update on the adaptive management project and a presentation from CWICNY regarding the need for improvements in back roads in New York. TAC also reviewed the workplan for the climate change project. TAC began the budget process by reviewing progress in implementing OFA and identifying a list of project gaps that TAC will consider in determining budget priorities. In August, LCBP held a workshop in Missisquoi Bay to share work on what has been done and research priorities concerning phosphorus reduction. Mike noted there is a tile drainage workshop at the Miner Institute in October.
- **E&O:** Meeting next in October. Over the summer LCBP staff completed Resource Room renovations, CBEI teacher training partners met twice, (additional training is scheduled for October, January and March). The annual Farm Awards selection process is in progress. The E&O Committee hopes to present several member nominations to the Executive Committee this fall. Crown Point visitor's center opened a new exhibit this summer.
- **HAPAC:** The emerging issues document that was presented to the Steering Committee in summer has been given to regional stakeholders groups in preparation for budget development meetings this fall. The Western Greenway project to connect Montreal and Manhattan via bike routes through Vermont is underway. The first ride was done this summer; maps are available. Installation of interpretative signage at the Valcour rest area has received approval from the NY Transportation Agency. The *War of 1812 Guide* published by National Geographic with a grant from CVNHP now has been translated and republished in French and will be released on October 28th in Montreal at the International Heritage Summit.

**Legislative Update** Tom reported that GLFC funds for FY13 are finalized at \$2.7M; the contract is signed and LCBP can start projects. Sequestration lowered the number last year and there is hope to regain it in future years. The FY14 senate subcommittees have included \$3.5M. The Interior Appropriations bill, EPA line item is maintained level-funded at this point. The CVNHP funding should get a small bump this year. Other EPA lines of interest also are in good shape in the Senate version of appropriations. The Farm bill has passed through Senate but the House seems conflicted on this bill and its future is uncertain. The Congress enters a recess next week so there are only 2 days to decide on a Continuing Resolution to avoid a shutdown.

**Managers Report** Bill reported that LCBP has had a very active summer, including:

- Staff annual reviews have been completed.
- US ACOE and the NYS Canal Corps met with us and all agree with the language of a draft cooperative agreement that the Canal Corps is ready to sign when US ACOE HQ approves the agreement. When the document is signed, LCBP will provide \$200,000 as matching funds, to move the project forward. The Canal Corporation has completed an engineering analysis of ways to divert the flow of the feeder canal overflow into the Hudson system. They also put boat launch stewards in place this year.

- NPS and GLFC funds are in place now, and staff is working on implementation of new tasks.
- Following the tragic QC train accident, many people have been thinking of the safety of rail cars. We are aware of 4 trains a day, each being more than 100 cars of oil, passing along rails that may not be designed to handle that load. This rail track is on NYS side of lake. There seem to be new risks and new hazards with a recent significant increase in train traffic. Gina noted that the Federal Rail Administration has regulations on interstate railways, and that this issue has been addressed at meetings in Vermont as recently as yesterday. Gina will get contacts for Bill.
- The Structured Decision Making contract is finalized and work soon will begin; the contractor selected is Robin Gregory. Robin will be attending Steering Committee meetings and asking questions over the next year so he can assist us in implementing an improved decision-making system for planning and budgeting (phosphorus tasks) next year.
- Over the course of the fall, at the convenience of the SC, it is time for the rotation of the Executive Committee leadership.
- Bill agreed to make contact with the Burlington Mayor to suggest a role on the Steering Committee.
- Clair provided an update on the (NEIWPC) Turf Fertilizer Project, which is a partnership project with states and EPA on guidelines for use of turf fertilizer. The interim final report presents 33 guidelines for turf fertilizer use. Although these practices may not work well for intense usage areas like parks or golf courses, the target is more the residential and business sectors. The project has developed good engagement with stakeholders, the only sector lacking now is the big box stores that sell turf fertilizers.
- Bill circulated a USGS handout on the funding status of Stream Gauges showing five that are now scheduled for discontinuation in October. Steering Committee members discussed the option of LCBP funding stream gauges for a fifth year, by pulling back funds presently committed to other tasks. Bill noted that several projects have not started yet, as GLFC agreement was just signed; there is a likelihood that some funds not required in the first year or two could be pulled from some of those tasks by changing their workplans and payment schedules. Daniel noted that they need the information from these gauges and he feels should be funded. Tom suggested that LCBP should not become a perpetual funding source for stream gauges, though it might choose to support gauges for one more year, as the importance of the gauging network data for monitoring TMDL implementation is very high.

**ACTION ITEM:** *David moved that LCBP agree to fund the five unfunded gauges this year (through Oct., 2014) with the understanding that VT DEC will make a commitment to seek funding from other partners for support of the gauging network in future years. Ron seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.*

**Over lunch** Stephanie presented an update on the ***Champlain Valley International Wine Trail***

**FY2014 Budget Development Timeline** was circulated, reflecting the guidance of the September Executive Committee, and providing several meetings in the budget approval process. The Committee reviewed the status of OFA LCBP tasks and remaining plan implementation priorities, as well as emerging new priorities.

**TAC** Mike W circulated and described a list of budget priorities that TAC recommends the Steering Committee consider:

- **Tile drainage** – Better tile drainage data (location and depth, etc.) is needed, but not available. Jan noted that USDA has prioritized collecting data on new tile drainage projects. Mike W. noted that the task funded last year was only a review of previous reports and does not give the data on existing installations.

- **Land Use Change** – Two analyses have been done and are outdated, so another is due - there is a particular need to quantify and locate conversions to and from crop land use.
- **3D hydrodynamic model of lake** - Currently we have a 'bathtub model' supporting the EPA TMDL redevelopment with a 2D model, and a more accurate model would be helpful for management.
- **Priorities from the Missisquoi Bay Workshop:**
  - Lake/Bay hydrodynamic and the need for an open source model
  - Drivers of cyanobacteria blooms and toxin production
  - Phosphorus speciation and sourcing
  - Lag time of responses from tributary nutrient loading reduction from BMPs
  - Improved data and technology sharing.
- **OFA Unaddressed Plan Priorities:**
  - Alewives - assessment of population dynamics and ecosystem impacts
  - Economics –an ecosystem services assessment would still be useful, as discussed last year
  - Toxins – there is a need to reinvigorate Toxins Task Force to examine business practices
- **TAC's ANS Subcommittee identified the following as priorities:**
  - Boat launch stewards -continuation
  - Economic impact study
  - Bilingual AIS pamphlets need revision and reprinting
  - Recommendations of the FLOOD REPORT
  - Encourage flood resilience coordination positions
  - Develop a comprehensive hydrologic model for the lake
  - Develop flood resilience guidelines for the agricultural community

David noted the role of LCBP sometimes is to undertake tasks that are not being done by other agencies. *Implementation, Monitoring, and Research* are 3 key funding categories for technical tasks. Mike noted that the categories David mentioned will be used by TAC for sorting and ranking tasks.

The Steering Committee discussed each task area listed by TAC. The tile drainage issue is very important. Improved land use change information is needed. Dave emphasized the need to understand changes in land use due to the conversion of undeveloped lands. Ron spoke about the conversion to cultivated land for corn, driven by the ethanol market is substantial. New ways to enhance agricultural flood resilience is essential. Breck noted that legacy effects of spring floods, and Tropical Storm Irene, on shorelines and near shore areas needs to be understood. The Committee agreed that a better understanding of the economic benefits of lake water quality is a key question, but that it should not be guided by a philosophical framework, but rather would need to be framed so the results are clearly applicable and useful. Tom noted that it would be helpful for the TAC to review and rank cormorant research and management needs. Gina noted the importance of transportation infrastructure, such as culverts and ditches on stormwater runoff, and the likely need to include this in the task priority list. David summarized the budget process, which will include Executive Committee meetings to refine and prioritize the list that it presents to the Steering Committee in February.

The Steering Committee agreed informally that its guidance to TAC was that the list presented was a very good basis for task development, and to go ahead to develop specific tasks that address these areas. Also, TAC should consider other items that may need to be interjected into the list as it develops through the fall. James asked how the process incorporates CAC recommendations. Bill noted that an email to him or the

TAC Chair with suggested priorities or tasks, prior to TAC's budget discussions, would be appropriate. Beyond that, participation of the CAC chairs in Executive and Steering Committee meetings is anticipated.

**E&O** Buzz circulated and described a list of budget priorities that E&O recommends the Steering Committee consider.

- Publish LCBP Atlas and watershed maps
- Hold *Climate Smart* community workshops
- Conduct a lake awareness campaign with realtors - sustainable business practices
- Publish invasive species literature in French
- Assess peoples' understanding of watershed issues
- Develop and produce a newspaper insert – to increase awareness of lake issues
- Continue teacher training efforts

Tom noted that changes in public understanding of watershed issues may demonstrate progress. Mike mentioned that the need for an invasive species literature review also was discussed by TAC. Bob spoke of the need for more education in best practices management, particularly for municipal public works. Daniel said a few years ago there were several new publications that could be updated and re-issued. The Steering Committee recommended that E&O develop these themes as task proposals.

**HAPAC:** Because priorities were discussed by the Steering Committee at a previous meeting, the HAPAC is on a good track, and has been developing task descriptions for presentation for the next meeting.

**Meeting Schedule** - The committee reviewed the meeting schedule and moved the November Steering Committee meeting to December, so that more people can attend. There will be two Executive Committee meetings in January to prepare a draft budget for the Steering Committee to consider in February.

**ACTION ITEM:** *Dave moved to enter Executive Session to consider committee nominations, Mike seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.*

- The Committee entered **Executive Session**.
- The Committee returned to **Open Session** by declaration of the chair.

**ACTION ITEM:** *Dave moved to appoint for three-year terms Dr. Jason Stockwell and Dr. Ed Romanowicz, as TAC members, and Dr. Bill Ardren as TAC Vice Chair. Ron seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote, with Breck abstaining.*

**New Business** - none

**Adjourn** ☺ - 3:12 pm