

Lake Champlain Basin Program
Steering Committee Meeting
Thursday June 5, 2014
Town Hall of Notre-Dame-de-Stanbridge
Approved Minutes

Members: Martin Mimeault (for Daniel Leblanc), Tom Berry, Bob Stegeman, Steve Garceau, Lynne Hamjian, Vicky Drew, Buzz Hoerr, John Krueger, Mike Winslow, Breck Bowden, Pierre Bilodeau, Dave Tilton, Renee Rouleau, Kari Dolan (for David Mears), Mario Paula (phone), Jan Surface (phone), Mark Hohengasser (phone), Catherine Brooks (phone), Mike Latham (phone); **Staff:** Bill, Jim, Colleen, Ryan, Elizabeth, Eric, Meg, Mari, Kathy, Clair Ryan, Fred Dunlap, Michaela Stickney, Jeanne Voorhees ; **Guests:** Robin Gregory, Michael Harstone, Philip Halteman, Brad Young, Pixley Hill, Lila Stanton, Annette Lafountain, Frederic Choinard

Meeting Begins –*Martin Mimeault, Chair* welcomed all present with introductions.

Moment in Memory. Former Steering Committee member *Louis Hak*, who recently passed away, was remembered by the committee.

ACTION ITEM: The committee reviewed the February 2014 meeting minute. There were some corrections (Kari clarified page 6, Martin corrected page 4). John moved to accept the minutes with corrections; Buzz seconded the motion which was approved unanimously

Public Comments

- Pixley Tyler Hill spoke of the Rock River issues and the Missisquoi Bay problems with algae blooms. Over the years there has been a lot of expense and a lot of work has been done in this watershed. How do we finish the work and how much will it cost? Pixley cited Heather Darby that about \$200k a year has been spent in recent years. She asked that the committee to think about how to complete the work on Rock River.
- Lila Slayton (via Pixley) noted the importance of agricultural land use to the local economy, and the issue that there are 300 dairy farms in Franklin County – and the water ways just cannot sustain current production, let alone more farm production. The dairy lobby in Vermont is very strong. There needs to be a long term effort is to promote agricultural diversification to a more sustainable approach to farming.
- Annette Lafountain noted that OBVMB has sampled 3 lakes for 3 months every day. A recent report published that the risk to people in contact with cyanobacteria are most likely to be gastroenteritis. This can include fishers, kayakers, etc. They are producing a brochure to tell people to be aware of these issues, and to give tips on protecting themselves. Lynne said there was a New England group on cyanobacteria and she will pass along the contact. Mike recommended that she contact Angela Shambaugh.

Brief Updates: Jurisdictions (VT, NY, QC, Fed Partners)

- NY has released a report on crude oil transport by rail in the basin. Operators of boat launches and retrieval at state launch sites now requires boat inspection and washing. NYS Canals Corporation is near agreement with Army Corps of Engineers regarding a barrier feasibility study on the Champlain Canal. The Imperial Dam removal project is active. Tom noted that he was getting a lot of calls for direction on what to do about oil transport risks to

Lake Champlain. Kari asked if there was a state-wide requirement for boat inspection or just at Lake George. Bob said there is a state wide initiative and the details are available online.

- **VT** and USGS have an agreement for the next fiscal year for the state to take over two of the stream gauges on Rock River and Pike River. Last week released a draft of Phase 1 of the Phosphorus TMDL plan. This plan includes new policies for agricultural storm water runoff from impervious surfaces. It will reduce loading from forestry operations impacts on logging roads, supports increased river management practices, including addressing some historical channeling of rivers. The plan does address impacts of point sources with a 20-year upgrade schedule. The greatest challenge is to identify the resources to implement the plan. EPA is still finishing up modeling of wastewater load, which will be incorporated in Phase 2 of the report. This fall when the TMDL draft is completed, EPA will hold public informational meetings. The main concerns now are finding and targeting the resources where they are needed most. The Critical Source Area report enables a targeted approach to greatest needs, and allows VT to work closely with NRCS and other partners to target funds to Missisquoi Bay. There is a new contract with UVM for outreach to farms in St Albans Bay.
- **QC** The ministry has changed Ministère and the organization name is changed to Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement et de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques – this reflects a redirection of the Ministry to climate change. There is a new draft report on TFM in Missisquoi Bay, and a stronger monitoring focus in Quebec to complement the US monitoring. The draft report is being reviewed now and hopefully will be released soon. The ministry is working on its analysis of progress towards the recommendations in the LCBP flood report of 2011. BGA monitoring plans have been curtailed this year in Quebec, with a reduction in funds since there has been limited health impact. Blooms will be monitored based on density, not quality. However, the public water intakes on Missisquoi Bay will still be monitored. Steve Garceau reported that in the summer of 2012 Quebec did fish sampling in Missisquoi Bay and the report should come out later this year.
- **US Federal Partners** –Dave Tilton reported on a number of projects that the USFWS is working on. Vicky said Regional Conservation Partnership program will be seeking proposals until July. Lake Champlain was not picked as a critical conservation area but there remains a substantial fund (\$400M) that could be obtained for agricultural BMPs from the Farm Bill. No minimum match is required but proposals with match will receive higher priority.

Legislative Update – Tom reported that:

- The farm bill and appropriations for 2014 are done. The FY15 budget is being worked on now and committees in house and senate are marking up appropriations bills.
- Upper Missisquoi and Trout Rivers are now in review for Wild and Scenic River designation through legislation introduced by Congressman Welch. There also is legislation developing to designate the north county national scenic trail to extend from Addison to Middlebury (it currently connects North Dakota to Lake Champlain).
- After flooding in 2011 the two federal governments requested the IJC to look at causes of flooding in Missisquoi and Richelieu River. IJC prepared a \$15M workplan to look at the problem. The US has appropriated slightly less than \$500K toward the project and the US State Dept. will need to know there is a cost share agreement with Canada to proceed.

Reports from Advisory Committee Chairs

NY CAC is at half membership, but hopes to be at full membership by fall. NYCAC is very interested in the RCPP program. NY has 3 gauges that run out of funding on September 30th.

VT CAC met two weeks ago at Tyler Place and held elections. Julie Moore is new chair and Lori Fisher is vice-chair. This meeting included a joint VT, NY & QC meeting.

QC CAC will have a general assembly on June 18th presenting projects on BGA, and funding for local organizations. In the management plan they will have new information on underground water supplies, local criteria for drinking water, and new regulations on agriculture buffer strips and residential construction sites. There will be a public meeting on spiny softshell turtle - conservation groups around the basin are trying to protect a residual population on the Pike River.

E&O circulated an update handout. The next meeting will be in mid-July.

HAPAC has worked on prioritizing emerging issues, based on meetings with the regional stakeholders groups. The handout (circulated) is what has come from these meetings. There will be an annual heritage summit in the fall.

TAC circulated a handout update. TAC has met 4 times since the last SC meeting, and reviewed several final reports and work plans for new projects. Strategic structured decision making was discussed at yesterday's meeting.

Manager's Report – Bill Howland

Since we went through reports from other committees it shows emerging issues and we will be discussing later today. Vermont Environmental Consortium met yesterday, and LCBP participated with an end-of-day wrap-up of the work of the meeting. Bill noted that funds from GLFC are not constrained entirely to US projects.

Sea lamprey barrier on Morpion Stream, presentation, tour – Brad Young, USFWS

Brad provided an overview of this new sea lamprey control tool, and a tour of the new lamprey barrier (site is adjacent to the meeting facility).

***Opportunities for Action* status review**

Eric reviewed the status of completion of tasks in *Opportunities for Action* by Chapter, and for each contributing partner – through the May 20th reporting date.

Emerging Issues (thinking of FY15) – TAC, HAPAC, E&O

A five-minute summary of emerging issues was presented by each Committee Chair. TAC included a handout listing projects considered in FY14 but not funded. The committee entered into a preliminary and general discussion of emerging and continuing priorities for FY15 funding.

Structured Decision Making project follow-up with *Robin Gregory* (ValueScope Research) and *Michael Harstone* (Compass Resource Management) presented. In addition to reviewing the input they have received on the influence diagrams and strategy tables and introducing the start of an interactive actions-evaluation table, Robin & Michael reviewed several of the other implications for the LCBP if a more SDM-type decision making process were to be put in place -- ways of clarifying program objectives and separating values and facts, ways of possibly getting more input on the values side and better communication with the public, ways of dealing with uncertainty, ways of addressing trade-offs, and ways to incorporate the lessons learned from monitoring. A number of questions were identified:

- Do all the projects LCBP funds actually meet the goals of the program?
- What is the return of the investment in particular LCBP-funded tasks?

- Does LCBP we want 613 tasks in next version of *OFA* (as in the current version)?
- Does LCBP *want* to employ specific priority-setting mechanisms when budgeting?
- Is there an adequate connection between short-term budgeting and long-term *OFA* goals?

Robin recommended:

- More explicit decision making process.
- Clarified objectives and assessment of the degree to which tasks actually address objectives
- Application of (SDM) tools and methods to meet objectives
- Incorporation of Influence Diagrams in the planning process.

Tom noted that at the onset, the SDM project was going to focus on phosphorus-related goals, and that filter no longer seems to be in place. Robin replied that per his current workplan, the SDM is being developed to work for all aspects of the program.

Lynne noted the need to schedule more time to work on the introduction of these tools into the LCBP process.

Mike noted that while we have been talking of SDM for revising *OFA*, it really needs to be put to use for budget discussions.

Buzz emphasized the need to get beyond the present physio-political decision making to structured decision making, so we can better see what we are funding and why it is important.

Mario noted some limitations 1) jurisdictional limits 2) large portion of budget is spoken for in staffing or Phase I budget items. So the SDM applied to budgeting will be useful for what else the LCBP is going to decide to do, but not so much for the core program.

Vicky likes the process because it results in a more transparent approach to task ranking.

Martin endorsed Vicky's comment that we need this tool to help to make decisions, and it needs to be a continuing process.

Bob recommended that budgeting not become so structured that we can't use common sense to make decisions

Kari felt it is an important process that will help LCBP move forward in a collaborative fashion and to better utilize talents and ideas of all the advisory committees.

Tom noted the need to get the process right to be transparent, but not getting lost into the paper charts and tables.

Clair felt the charts will be helpful, but would lose transparency if they dominated the process. It is important to recognize that most of our tasks have to be one or two year term projects, so the long-term effectiveness of some projects will be hard to assess.

Renee felt the charts are useful to describe tasks, but there is a similar need to see the reality of the problems first and then see objectives of the project. Cost effectiveness is only meaningful if the task also has a positive impact on the lake.

Dave notes this is an effort that LCBP needs to take on. He also cautioned that the full range of responsibilities in *OFA* needs to be on the table, not nutrient concentrations alone.

Bill thanked Robin and Michael for their work to map out a major step in good direction for LCBP. The next steps for the Steering Committee will be to incorporate the first steps of SDM in the discussions about the FY15 budget, at the September meeting.

The Mayor of *Notre Dame de Stanbridge* thanked the committee for visiting the village.

Adjourned - 3:42 pm☺