

## Lake Champlain Basin Program Steering Committee Meeting

Tuesday, November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2015  
Bishop Booth Conference Center, Burlington, VT

### APPROVED Minutes

**Members:** Mary Borg (for VT DEC), Bob Stegemann, Daniel LeBlanc, Mike Winslow, Bill Ardren, Buzz Hoerr, Gene Brickman, Breck Bowden, Vic Putman, Julie Moore, Miro Weinberger, Tom Berry, John Krueger, Johanna Hunter, Mario Paula (phone), Caitlin Lecker (phone), Gina Campoli

**Guests:** Diana Kohtio (ACOE), Madeleine Cotter (Americorps), Senator Leahy (phone)

**Staff:** Bill Howland, Ryan Mitchell, Colleen Hickey, Jim Brangan, Eric Howe, Meg Modley, Stephanie Castle, Fred Dunlap, MaryJo Feuerbach, Michaela Stickney, Martin Mimeault

#### **Welcome and Introductions** - Mary Borg, Chair

Mary Borg chaired the meeting. Introductions around the table.

#### **Draft Meeting Agenda Review** - No changes

#### **ACTION ITEM - August 2015 Steering Committee minutes approval**

Buzz Hoerr moved to approve. Vic Putman second. No discussion. Motion was approved, no abstentions.

**Public Comments - Madeleine Cotter:** If anyone present wishes to be included on a distribution list of clean water program initiatives in Vermont, sign up ([here](#)), and the VT ANR Americorps will add your contact to the email list.

#### **Jurisdictional Updates (NY, QC, VT, US Fed Partners)**

**NY:** Bob announced the new commissioner nominee, Basil Seggos, who will be formally appointed when the state senate is back in session. NYS has deployed 19 first response trailers, one in Plattsburgh, to guide responders and improve readiness in case of an oil spill. NY is working with Vermont to improve data sharing concerning this risk. The Imperial Dam removal project is in progress- NYS DEC is working with the USACE to develop a removal plan. The Boquet River Dam removal has finished since the last Steering Committee meeting took place.

**QC:** Daniel announced the new government change in Canada. Montreal recently began work on their sewer system. The city had a planned discharge of 8 billion liters of untreated wastewater into the St Lawrence during construction. The MDDELCC is beginning to implement its control and monitoring plan including a new task force of 20 government experts and 3 independent experts to guide implementation. A new concern has arisen with pesticides in the water, so MDDELCC is discussing possible treatment with the farmers to reduce the application of pesticides.

**VT:** Mary reported that the Clean Water Fund Board recommended allocations to address the goals of the TMDL. Revenues for the Board come from a .2% tax on property transfers, which sunsets in FY18. After a public comment period, the Board made its final recommendations for FY16 and FY17. The governor will include these recommendations in his budget adjustment proposal. The Board recommended:

- \$4.5Million for municipal stormwater, wastewater and roads;
- \$3,135,000 for improved agriculture practices;
- \$1,150,000 for river channel and floodplain restoration;
- \$1,185,000 for grassroots partner support;
- \$430,000 for LiDAR acquisition

A new clean water website ([cleanwater.vermont.gov](http://cleanwater.vermont.gov)) outlines the Clean Water Initiative. Municipal Task Forces have been appointed through agreements with the regional planning commissions. Clean Water Reports will be submitted to the Legislature at the beginning of the 2016 session. Mary reviewed the new development rules and permits relating to Act 64. A new round of ERP grants is now accepting

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applications, which are due by November 20, 2015. TMDL conversations between NY and VT continue. State is working with Burlington in integrated permitting and plans to address all their clean water issues in one permit. There are 20 Americorps interns working with the state in different areas. Daniel mentioned that we will have the first meeting on December 1<sup>st</sup> with DEC and EPA to share info and data about the responsibilities of each partner to Missisquoi Bay. Mayor Miro noted that Burlington has been very focused on lake clean up and urban stormwater. The city has installed a number of green infrastructure projects on both Winooski St. and on Pearl St, including trees in cells on the streetscape. Miro reported on Burlington's work on the integrated permitting project and feels that it has promise for getting the greatest load reductions for the amount of funds allocated.

**Federal Updates:** Johanna reported that EPA is reviewing 250 comments on the draft TMDL and is aware of the ongoing collaboration between states. EPA plans to issue a final TMDL in December. There will be a December 14<sup>th</sup> meeting to discuss the oil train issues with the joint CACs. Regions 1 and 2 have had a lot of good dialogue regarding this issue, and will participate.

Gene spoke of Bartlett Brook and Potash Brook projects which should start soon. The USACE has signed the canal barrier feasibility study cost share agreement between the NYSCC and the USACE and now is figuring out how to deposit a check received from LCBP for the local match, in the USACE account. Diana will be coordinating future meetings with LCBP, USACE and NYSCC in Albany, NY. The feasibility study will take about a year. Bob asked about USACE involvement in the Imperial Dam project and Gene noted that the USACE is advising that project.

USFWS reported that sea lamprey control actions were conducted this fall with NY and VT states in Hope Brook, Winooski River and Poultney River despite extremely low flows. Record returns of landlocked Atlantic salmon numbered over 150 in the Winooski River and upstream near Richmond. Over 1,500 salmon returned to the GCH in Grand Isle, giving hope for the restoration of natural populations that have been absent for over 150 years.

Dave Tilton has retired after a long and illustrious career with USFWS, and there will be a retirement party on December 10<sup>th</sup> - contact Bill Ardren if you would like to attend. Bill noted that Dave has been one of the longest serving members of the LCBP SC and his support and counsel has been invaluable through that period. Gene noted that USACE and USFWS have worked together for 20 years and it has been a pleasure working with Dave Tilton. Martin also wanted to note for the record that Dave was an essential partner in putting the sea lamprey barrier in the Morpion Stream in QC.

### **Advisory Committees- TAC, E&O, HAPAC, CAC (VT, NY, QC)**

**TAC** Mike reported that TAC has met three times since the last SC meeting. They have reviewed the economic impacts of clean water project and another project on climate change and stormwater. TAC has approved a work plan for USGS to do water quality analysis.

**EO** Buzz reported that E&O had a flood of 21 proposed projects to review and rank; it is in the process now of doing that work.

**HAPAC** John reported that 13 grant awards will be proposed to the Steering Committee later in the meeting. Three weeks ago Colleen organized a program presenting stories of the Saranac River for NY teachers that was held at SUNY- Plattsburgh. In this program John spoke with 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders about Duncan Campbell who was killed as a result of the attack on Fort Carillion/Fort Ticonderoga. Robert Louis Stephenson, while spending a summer at Saranac Lake, wrote this history and published it in 1887, with the title TICONDEROGA. Bob applauded this work to engage the students in the cultural heritage of the area.

**VTCAC** – The VT CAC has met three times since the SC last met. The committee heard from Beverly Wemple about back roads and contributions of P to Lake Champlain, and has been working to assemble

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information on emergency management and spill response. The CAC is developing its annual action plan to share with the legislature. There will be a larger meeting at the Shelburne Town Offices, to be focused on oil trains, and USCG, EPA, and the states will attend.

**NYCAC** – The NYCAC has met twice since the last SC. Members watched the last section of the Willisboro Dam being removed, opening 40 miles of fish spawning habitat. And both the salmon and fishermen have returned in force as a result. There had been significant spawning below the dam. In October the the CAC looked at the streambank logjam stabilization project, funded by NYSDEC, which has resulted in an increase of 4,000 feet of streambank fishing access. A fishing easement will include a parking area, footpath, and stairs down to the river. After initial hesitation, the community has come together to support the removal of the dam. Wollastonite cells have been working well at the treatment facility in Willsboro; it is gravity fed and is 90% effective.

**QCCAC** – Martin reported that Pierre Leduc will return as the CAC representative on the LCBP SC, and will make future reports. Martin reviewed the implementation plan for controlling runoff and improving soil conservation in agricultural sectors of MRC Brome-Missisquoi. Richard Lauzier will work as a technical advisor for the agronomic work to be done. A water master plan was developed that has been presented to the municipalities. Two conceptual projects have been proposed for funding by the LCBP: a boat launch steward program and a riparian buffer education and outreach campaign, having in mind LCBP's GLFC support. Johana noted that this cross-boundary collaboration is very important.

**Legislative Updates** – Tom Berry noted that this is the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Special Designation Act, resulting in the Lake Champlain Basin Program, and the program has been a huge success.

- *Senator Leahy joined the Steering Committee meeting by speakerphone from his Washington office. He congratulated the LCBP for 25 years of excellent work to protect the future of Lake Champlain. He thanked all members for working on the outcome of the Special Designation Act on this 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its passage, and thanked the EPA and the staff at LCBP for working hard on Lake Champlain issues. He mentioned he is proud of the LCBP and plans to continue support for its work. The Senator recalled his long personal connections to the lake, including meeting a young woman on the shores of Lake Champlain, who he still sees every day.*

Tom reported that the EPA line in the Senate budget is \$4.399M, and on the House side came in at \$1.399M. Negotiations are taking place at the staff level ahead of the Dec 11<sup>th</sup> end of CR and Senator Leahy believes there will be an omnibus bill. GLFC allocations include \$3.5M in the Senate and \$0 on the House side right now. USACE aquatic plant research control funding is included on the Senate side but not on the House side. An IJC request is in at \$500k for flood resilience work. The Congress is considering a two year budget planning process.

**Manager's Report**- LCBP is part way through the review of local implementation grant applications and they will be presented later on the agenda. We are starting the preparation of over 100 new local implementation grant contracts. We also are working on our next version of the Annual Report of Activities that we will share with you at the next meeting. It will summarize the main projects that LCBP is working on to implement past budgets that the SC has approved. Stephanie provided an update on the IJC Lake Champlain-Richelieu River Flood Resilience work. IJC has prepared the draft report and presented it to the commissioners in Ottawa. The report includes static inundation maps of the Lake Champlain shoreline for the northern part of the lake, from 100 to 106 feet AMSL, at half foot intervals. All the maps are live and active on the IJC website in both languages. This project also includes work on a forecasting plan that has been presented to partners in VT and QC for comment. Stephanie has been the Secretary for this committee which has been a great role for LCBP in this project.

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### **FY16 Budget Task Development by Advisory Committees**

**Education & Outreach Committee** - Buzz circulated draft project proposals reflecting \$1.4M in potential tasks. There are some projects being reviewed by both the TAC and E&O committee. Interests include expanding our LCBP website, work with department of public works crews on deicing practices, teacher training programs, coal tar driveway education, an LCBP-ECHO partnership for state of the lake exhibits, etc. Bill noted that we could work with ECHO to take SOL information and interpretation out to a larger public. LCBP's role will be to maintain control of the content and interpretation, but ECHO could showcase this graphic work in a number of ways, bringing exhibit expertise and expanded audience to the project. Gina asked how many of these projects are aimed at VTRANS interests (such as public works crews), and noted the importance on not duplicating work already in progress. Mary noted that agencies have been working together (Ag, VTrans and ANR) and there is a communications work group that can share education and outreach information to help avoid duplication. Bob noted that the Lake George Regional Planning Conference had a presentation from NH DOT on similar public works issues. MaryJo spoke about games and simulations used in Cape Cod for nutrient management planning and she can provide contacts.

**Heritage Area Program Advisory Committee** - HAPAC has been going through the same process used in previous years, and it includes an extensive staff schedule of meetings with stakeholder groups throughout the 9,000 square mile NHA. This is the third iteration of the priority list, and it now has been ranked – to be reintroduced in this budget process. On December 4<sup>th</sup> there will be an annual draft budget review to give the regional stakeholders one more time to rank and review the projects. John noted that HAPAC is significantly farther through the process than the other committees, and now is refining task descriptions and budgets.

**Technical Advisory Committee** - Mike noted that LCBP has received 59 technical concept proposals for review, reflecting the Steering Committee request that we cast a broader net in developing task proposals. Mike circulate a spreadsheet of tasks showing which have been reviewed to date by TAC. TAC will conclude its task proposal review in December and by January will rank projects. Bill noted that this year, LCBP asked all Steering Committee members to submit proposed tasks or task priorities. Mike noted that TAC presumes that the SC will fund the local implementation grants, and they will be included in the key functions budget Bill will prepare. Mary-Jo asked for clarification about the difference between local implementation grants and the larger projects TAC proposes. The TAC proposals are normally carefully targeted tasks in need of completion, and based on a specific RFP process. The local grants are chosen through a competitive process responding to a more general RFP that allows a broader array of proposals to be considered. Bob noted that the total list of potential tasks amounts to about \$7.6M. Last year, about \$3M of that was allocated to technical tasks. Gene noted that some of the proposed tasks might be suitable for support under WRDA Section 542 using USACE funds.

### **FY16 Budget Discussion and Guidance for Committees**

The committee discussed proposed task concepts developed by E&O, HAPAC, and TAC. Because of the funding and contractual cycles, many of the tasks included in the FY2016 LCBP budget, especially those involving a field season, will begin in 2017.

**HAPAC**- John proposes continuing several tasks that are supported each year, as expectations of the NHA management plan, such as the wayside exhibits, regional stakeholder coordination, CVNHP Summit, and various local heritage grants. This year's focus is on conservation & community in conjunction with the NPS 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

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Bob S. likes the focus on the wayside exhibits as a branding tool, and noted that the Adirondacks are undergoing new signage design to help the public connect to the park. He also liked the mini-recreation grants, and the focus on connecting communities to the resources, with an explanation of the connection. This would help people connect better to their environment through recreation.

Breck supported the focus on youth.

**E&O-** Buzz explained that he and Colleen will present the listed tasks to the E&O committee for their ranking process at the next E&O meeting. It will be a very different year based on new committee membership. There are several unique projects that are more technical in nature, rather than technical training based. Bill noted that projects can be moved from one committee to another (E&O to TAC, etc.). But in the end, the projects are considered collectively, and scores are averaged across committees for funding consideration. Buzz added that E&O saves as much money as possible to allocate towards education and outreach grants, which is the most popular part of the program.

Colleen noted that this year TAC and E&O have worked together more than in previous years and projects have been moved between committees.

Julie said that there are a lot of good technical projects that LCBP does every year, but there also is often a problem with getting the final results out to the public from technical reports. The E&O committee might consider a way to extend the reach of these technical projects. Buzz pointed out that the biggest public outreach product of LCBP, the State of the Lake report, could be made more accessible through a proposed task to feature SOL at ECHO.

**TAC-** Mike discussed several highlighted tasks for which TAC has a particular interest in Steering Committee input before more work is done on their development. First, if funding is or should be available from another source, should a task be taken off the list for consideration by LCBP? Johanna suggested to take it off the list if funding is available elsewhere.

- TAC is considering a modeling task; Daniel clarified for the hydrodynamic model, that the IJC project is focused only on flood forecasting, not the full modeling that is being proposed. Bob S. thinks that so much money going toward a modeling research effort rather than for pollution prevention may not be a good idea. Buzz added that flooding is an important subject for this committee to consider. He mentioned the USACE modeling effort on the Great Lakes is extremely useful, and if that is the goal of this project, then it would have very useful outcomes. Mike clarified that TAC has not prioritized projects yet. The Steering Committee advised TAC to keep the project on the developing task list.
- Mike brought up the proposed SeaGrant project as a new type of partnership for LCBP. Breck ran through his connections between SeaGrant and TAC and noted that the mission of SeaGrant is very closely aligned with that of the LCBP. Eric Howe noted that LCBP has similar projects with NRCS (edge of field). Bill clarified that LCBP would carefully review projects to make sure they correspond within the mission of LCBP and operational requirements such as a QAPP. Tom asked if the project would be education and outreach, or research. Breck clarified that it could be in either category. This project could leverage national SeaGrant funds and give Lake Champlain SeaGrant the ability to better compete for national funding. The Steering Committee advised TAC to keep the project on the developing task list.
- Next, Mike asked for a reading on the post-doc award. Johanna noted that a \$200k project is a high price tag project and asked if it could be scaled back. Mike clarified that a post-doc costs that amount. Tom suggested that no name should be attached to this project, and that TAC should rank the value of the project accordingly.
- Mike moved on to the next 5 projects looking at implementation, and asked if they could be combined into a local grant task that is capped at a higher price tag than traditional local grants. The

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Steering Committee agreed with lumping these projects together for the purpose of discussion and ranking.

- The cormorant management project support is proposed every year and it is never ranked high by TAC. Mike contends it is a political question rather than a technical question. It will stay on the task list for the purpose of being prioritized with other tasks.

### **Opportunities for Action- 2016 Planning;**

Eric went over the *OFA-2016* development timeline which aims for signatures in fall of 2016. He briefly outlined the concept areas presently in *OFA*, working from high level to task level. He noted that LCBP staff has set aside several days to work on developing a basic structural draft for Steering Committee review in February.

The Steering Committee discussed the organization of *OFA* and agreed that it does not need to delve down as deeply as previous versions have. The emphasis on *OFA-2016* will be on the goals, objectives and task areas for LCBP plan implementation, rather than also detailing tasks to be implemented by partners, as was included in *OFA-2010*. Proposed tasks in the management plan, (and also, it is hoped in the budget each year) will include anticipated outcomes and listed performance metrics suitable for an evaluation of progress. TAC will discuss objective level and task-area level plan components in January and February, 2016.

Bill proposed that a Steering Committee homework assignment will be sent to each member, so that feedback into the planning process can be inclusive. Eric will send the details of the homework assignment in time to be reflected in the next draft *OFA* report to the Steering Committee.

### **ACTION ITEM - Executive Session**

Johanna moved to enter Executive Session for the purpose of committee nominee discussions; Breck seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

- The committee entered **Executive Session** and then returned to **Open Session**.

### **ACTION ITEM - Appointments**

Bob moved to appoint *Jim Jutras, Andy Chevrefils* and *Angela Shambaugh* to the TAC; Johanna seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

### **ACTION ITEM – peer reviews of competitive grants**

Breck moved to enter Exec Session for the purpose of considering peer reviews of competitive grants; Vic seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Mike recused himself from further discussions and left the meeting.

- The committee entered **Executive Session** and then returned to **Open Session**.

### **ACTION ITEMS– Record of Decision on competitive grants**

- Vic moved to approve *Flood Resilience and Climate Change* local grant awards detailed in a draft ROD, to reflect peer reviewer's recommendations. Johanna seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.
- Bob moved to approve *Watershed Organization Support for Road Maintenance* local grant awards detailed in a draft ROD, to reflect peer reviewer's recommendations. Johanna seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote but for one abstention (Gina).
- Breck moved to approve *Impervious Surface Management in Schools* local grant awards detailed in a draft ROD, to reflect peer reviewer's recommendations. Johanna seconded the motion.

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**Other Business** Johanna noted that a few meeting dates were a problem with the federal calendar. January 19 2016 is the day after a holiday. Oct 2016 meeting is right after Columbus Day, and November 2016 is the day before Veterans' Day. Bill agreed to propose a remedy for these scheduling conflicts.

**Adjourned**

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