

Lake Champlain Basin Program Steering Committee Meeting
Wednesday, June 22, 2016

Great Room, [Main Street Landing Performing Arts Center](#), 60 Lake Street, Burlington, VT

Draft Meeting Summary

Meeting Begins *Alyssa Schuren, Chair*

Welcome and Introductions

Members: Alyssa Schuren, Bob Stegemann, Daniel Leblanc, Gene Brickman, Laura Treischman, Jenn Callahan (for Gina Campoli) Vic Putman, John Krueger, Mario Paula, Johanna Hunter, Breck Bowden, Mike Winslow, Renée Rouleau, Mark Hohengasser (via phone), Miro Weinberger (AM), Christina Marts (PM)

Staff: Bill Howland, Jim Brangan, Colleen Hickey, Ryan Mitchell, Elizabeth Lee, Eric Howe, Meg Modley Gilbertson, Stephanie Castle, Kathy Jarvis, Bethany Sargent, Fred Dunlap, Martin Mimeault, Jane Ceraso, MaryJo Feuerbach

Guests: Diana Kohtio, Pete LaFlamme, Kari Dolan, Tom Berry

Draft Meeting Agenda review

ACTION ITEM: April 2016 Steering Committee minutes approval

Gene Brickman moved to approve, second by Vic Putman. All in favor. Approved.

Public Comments

John K shared cards from students from Saranac Central 4th graders thanking us for their recent E&O local grant.

Updates – *handouts in binders*

Jurisdictional

NY – Basil Seggos was officially approved as Commissioner of NYS DEC. Statewide AIS regulations are in place. Working with Quebec and USFWS on restoration projects across the watershed. DEC is accepting applications for programs for waste water treatment plants for asset management state-wide.

QC – A “Green Fund” is in place which is supported through taxes and waste management.

VT – TMDL was released June 17. Over the next 90 days will be releasing information and hosting meetings on the Phase 1 Implementation Plan. All of this builds on the Clean Water Act passed in 2015. Clean water funding is currently only set for 3 years and ends in 2018. Working with Treasurer’s Office to look for long-term support for the fund and identify revenue sources over the next 20 years. Continuing to release ecosystem restoration grants and continue the better back roads program. Bethany Sargent is new outreach coordinator and LCBP VT coordinator. Looking at financial assessments, tracking activities and keep on track with goals.

US Federal Partners

Army Corps – Section 542 programs has three programs underway. Agreement for Champlain Canal AIS barrier feasibility study is at Headquarters for signature and should hear in July or August.

EPA – Johanna said TMDL was released. 5 1/2 year effort to revise this report. There are refinements to the TMDL but core of it remains the same. You will see a very carefully crafted document which addresses many of the issues from comments and partners. Now on to the steps to take actions to protect Lake Champlain. Several of VT partners were also recognized by EPA merit awards showing how important their work is.

Mario – Region 2 role was supporting Region 1 in their work.

Advisory Committees

TAC – Edge of field monitoring update –results are not encouraging. BMP changes made to some fields and not to others, but generally are not seeing a response in phosphorus reductions from BMPs. Cyanobacteria monitoring is ramping up for the field season. TAC reviewed several workplans, and has been working on OFA. Boat launch stewards also are trained and out at launches.

Breck noted that the lack of response in the edge of field monitoring is not necessarily that it does not work. There are often extenuating circumstances. MaryJo noted at federal partners meeting that Vicki noted that across the US it was working.

E&O – is meeting tomorrow. 800 students received presentations over the last 30 days. 2,000 new watershed maps have been printed and are ready to go. Five VT state parks have taken watershed models for summer and are working to make other kits. 17 of teachers enrolled in WEC, including six from Hawaii.

333,334 people have now visited the resource room at ECHO.

HAPAC – 11 counties in CVNHP covering 9000 sq. miles. Meeting with regional stakeholders' groups, \$300,000 budget this year. A questing guide is in development for the Champlain bridge area which will have riddles to solve and participants will receive a challenge coin for solving them. 11 passport guides designed for 11 sites, if visitors stamp their NPS passports from all 11 sites then they receive a challenge coin. Also celebrated the 350th anniversary commemoration of Fort St Anne in Isle la Motte and unveiled a wayside exhibit.

CAC

VT – After April meeting, Bob Krebs announced he was not running for re-election to the VT legislature. May meeting heard from Kim Greenwood on environmental enforcement at VT DEC. Planning annual retreat July 19th

NY – last met on April 26th. Bill discussed ongoing LCBP programs including OFA, the LCBP annual report and budget updates. The strategic plan for NY CAC was discussed and looking to develop a short summary of projects and priorities similar to VTCAC. Town of Willsboro hosting Waterfest July 15th. The lake level is so low that some of water supplies are concerned. This lake level is not normally seen until August.

QC –New draft climate change programs will be included in new regulations. 13 spiny softshell turtles were returned to Missisquoi Bay this summer, over 700 released since 2010. There was a meeting to discuss projects to reduce erosion. Johanna announced that the International Climate Change Summit is to be held in Boston in 2017.

Legislative Updates – *Congressional staff*

Tom recognizes the State of Vermont on their work on the TMDL effort with the EPA.

Currently, Senator Leahy will be at ECHO at 2pm on Friday to discuss fisheries and restoration projects. Currently funding for programs that benefit Lake Champlain work is on par with FY16

levels. State and foreign appropriations have not been marked up yet. Interior was marked up last week, and Lake Champlain is at \$4.4M. Requested by administration at \$1.4 but has been \$4.4 last few years. Likelihood is good that this will pass. Senator requested equalized funding on heritage areas, but was not successful in that outcome. Wild and scenic rivers program is in good shape. Nationally, the Heritage Area Program funding was bumped up to 19.1M.

Dozens of groups from City of Burlington and NGOs have requested banning oil rains on the NY side. Senator is behind this.

Renee said that Missisquoi Bay is one of the worst for blue green algae. Call to mayors around the baie met in Ottawa and understand to clean up we need to have an approach. We want to create organization of mayors to fight the algae in the Bay. Venice en Quebec does a lot of publicity to keep people on the water and coming to the area.

Director's Report - Bill Howland

Bill briefly reviewed the FY2016 budget allocation, with a few changes to it since the Steering Committee approved it in February.

Staff have been working on the OFA revision, and it is now in good shape, with more work to do over the summer with feedback from this committee and our partners. Meg has been recruiting boat launch stewards, including training for use of boat wash stations. Bill has been updating SOPs due to increased budgets and has been working with NEIWPC on shared files to provide better management of budget tracking. Bill has made a couple of changes in the approved budget. He learned that two gauges were going to be taken offline by USGS due to lack of funding. He had a discussion with Marc Gaden at the GLFC about adjusting the funding budget by \$36,000 to keep those gauges going. He took the money out of the local grants line to cover this expense. Tom said this came up in federal partners meeting. Last Friday, he was in VT Monitoring Cooperative meeting, and there may be some funding available and may have one of the gauges covered.

Will be seeing more and more data needed on a tributary and subwatershed basis to get a good look at what is happening at the subwatershed level. Tom reported that there was a 50K mistake out of the \$3.5M from GLFC which may not show up on the spreadsheets.

Tom asked about an update on the hiring process. Jane said there was two finalists; there will be presentations on June 29th at Town of Shelburne.

FY16 budget discussion: Innovative Solutions for the St. Albans Bay watershed – Eric Howe ECHO Culture for Clean Water Innovative Solutions group – Breck Bowden

Breck briefly provided some background information about the ECHO Culture for Clean Water initiative, and the “Innovative Solutions” subcommittee of this initiative. The project is funded by an NGO and managed by the VOICES program at ECHO, and was developed through a process that led to the VT Farm to Table program. Early on, the team was to identify unique methods of reducing phosphorus, and then landed on the idea of developing an “Innovation Hub”.

Concurrently, TAC had been going through the FY16 budget process and soliciting projects. There might be good synergy in what the Solutions group would like and available LCBP funds to support some ideas out of this group. A formal letter from the Solutions group is enclosed in today's binder. Summary in binder also and includes bullets of what the Solutions group is looking for.

After some discussion, the Steering Committee decided to that it would be appropriate for a subgroup of the Steering Committee to discuss options for supporting this hub further and then report back to the Steering Committee at a subsequent meeting.

USACE Presentation:

Gene Brickman quickly reviewed some of the Corps programs that would be appropriate to extend to the Lake Champlain watershed. Diana provided a more in-depth overview of USACE projects that might be work that could be done in the Lake Champlain Basin. She also described how their projects go through the process for selection and implementation, particularly their Ecosystem Restoration Planning process, including floodplain work. Tom asked if FEMA accepted the work. Gene said usually it does. It might be possible to submit work to this program that is required by FEMA because USACE can FEMA guidelines.

Opportunities for Action – plan development review

Timeframe:

Eric quickly reviewed the timeframe of development of OFA up to this point, beginning with February 2014, with numerous discussions at Steering Committee and sub-committee levels over the subsequent 24 months which brought us to the draft to be reviewed and discussed today.

Mario pointed out that the approval process of EPA Region 2 has a few more steps now than in the past and paired with new director lends to need for a flexible schedule. Tom asked if new leadership at state or federal level could delay the release more. Johanna said she does not feel it would be an issue. Mario said last time international affairs office wanted something close to final. Bill said that last time there were Quebec actions, this version will not have that and the premier will not be signing the document.

Key Functions:

LCBP will help coordinate and facilitate the Federal Partner meetings. Will try to connect the Federal Partner and Steering or Executive Committee meetings together to reduce travel costs. Tom said that the first section looks like bylaws rather than a plan. Would it be better to have a set of bylaws AND a plan? Breck also recommends having two separate documents. Johanna suggested we consider an appendix with the legislation, definition of committees, etc.

Progress Tracking: We could look at environmental progress measures or are we better having a matrix to measure success. Tom feels that the LCBP should be the one to be sure tasks are complete. Diana said that a matrix across the agencies could be developed, but would need specific ways of measuring across the agencies. Mike said he is uncomfortable with performance measures listed and should not have the LCBP responsible for the tasks being completed. Bill hopes they can be tied to the two-year goals. Alyssa feels there needs to be some engagement from the SC and might be worth creating a group of staff and others of this group to determine the performance measures. Bill said if OFA is going to give guidance to the annual budget exercise, may want to make commitment to performance measures they would be assigned as tasks are developed.

Priority Watersheds: Survey had 3 of 8 responses in favor of prioritizing specific watersheds for LCBP resources. Tom said we should not identify specific watersheds because we have the TMDL plan, VT DEC ERP, NRCS and may want to be able to backfill from the priorities of other organizations. Mike said the 3 priority watersheds are targeted because they are farthest from P level and would benefit most for targeting funds. Gene said that if SC agrees then a lot of language would need to be changed and could cause competition with other areas of need.

Competitive Grants: Discussion about whether LCBP should consider submitting proposals to national-level grant competitions to augment LCBP resources. Tom feels we need discussion on this to develop set of protocols to do so. Ideally should be in partnership with other organizations in the

basin. General consensus was to proceed with caution, but explore options and work with the Executive and Steering Committee to develop a process to do this without directly competing with other Lake Champlain groups.

Section V: There had been a suggestion to move most research and monitoring tasks into a separate section in OFA (Section V as presented in this meeting). After some discussion, there was consensus on keeping this section integrated through the rest of the document.

Eric, Meg, and Ryan then briefly reviewed the general outline and key points of the four sections of the plan. Very little discussion here due to lack of time on the agenda.

Steering Committee members should provide comments back to Eric by mid-late July.

ACTION ITEM: enter *Executive Session* to discuss competitive awards.

Committee will return to *Open Session* per order of the chair

ACTION ITEM: Committee will act on proposed *Record of Decision*

Motion by Gene Brickman, second by Breck Bowden, to award the WWTF Asset Management Project to MJ Engineering Associates. Mike Winslow and Vic Putman abstained.

Other Business

Bill Howland provided a few parting comments prior to adjourning, thanking the Staff and the Steering Committee. Everyone thanked and commended Bill for his work with LCBP over the past 17 years.

4:00 Adjourn