

**Lake Champlain Basin Program
Steering Committee Meeting
Firehouse Gallery, Church Street, Burlington, Vermont
Approved Minutes January 18-19, 2012**

Steering Committee Members Present: David Mears (chair), Daniel Leblanc, Robert Stegemann, Chuck Ross, Mary Watzin, Breck Bowden, Gina Campoli, Christina Marts, Catherine Brooks, Buzz Hoerr, Ron Jackson, Jeanne Voorhees, Marilyn Stephenson, David Tilton, Kip Potter (for Vicky Drew), Mario Paula (for Mario DelVicario by phone), Mike Latham (by phone), Mark Hohengasser (by phone); **Staff:** Bill Howland, Jim Brangan, Colleen Hickey, Ryan Mitchell, Eric Howe, Stephanie Strouse, Kathy Jarvis, Martin Mimeault, Michaela Stickney, Fred Dunlap, Clair Ryan, Mike Jennings; **Others present:** ANR Secretary Deb Markowitz, Tom Berry, Kari Dolan, David Borthwick-Leslie, Susan Warren, Mike Kline, Julie Moore, Wayne Laroche, Eric Smeltzer, Phelan Fretz

Meeting Convenes – David Mears (Chair) opened the meeting and all present introduced themselves. David gave an assignment to committee members to review budget information before tomorrow's meeting so the discussion can move along smoothly. There were no changes to the agenda.

Public Comments: Dave Borthwick-Leslie asked for an update on the status of the Army Corps of Engineers' WRDA Section 542 projects.

ACTION ITEM: Buzz moved to approve the Steering Committee November 16th Meeting Minutes as presented; Breck seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved, no abstentions.

Brief Updates from the Regions

Vermont – David Mears reported that extensive discussions of the 2011 floods and related policy issues are taking place at the State House; at least a dozen different draft bills address flooding impacts. A recent state report on the Irene Flood Response has a section on environmental impact of special interest to the Steering Committee; the report is on the state website (www.vtstrong.vt.gov). A collaborative effort reflecting the leadership of Vicky Drew USDA, NRCS, has resulted in an MOU by a number of state, federal and community organizations which have committed to work together and share information in water resource stewardship in agricultural lands; VT DEC and LCBP are among the signers.

Québec - Daniel LeBlanc reported the adoption of Bill 89 to enforce environmental rules through new sanctions, giving the province additional authority to stop activities causing damage to the environment or risk to the health of citizens. This includes the authority to suspend or revoke any permit. Although this is an important tool, the province acknowledges that there are challenges in issuing citations to municipalities, companies and individuals, when there are environmental problems resulting from their actions. Since the floods of last spring Québec has installed a new gauging station on the Richelieu River, which records stage information every 15 minutes and uploads to a website display, so the public can follow the flow in real-time.

New York - Bob Stegemann noted that, like Vermont, New York continues to deal with the impacts of Irene flooding. A major challenge is debris management, and the removal of debris piles. NYS DEC staff have met with town supervisors and appreciates the magnitude of the problems towns have had to address. Much work needs to be done before spring, which will bring possible new flooding. The NYS

budget was proposed by the Governor and it shows that many of the jobs that were vacant have been eliminated. The Dept. of Transportation, for example, is consolidating from 11 districts to 6 districts. **Federal Partners** – Kip Potter reported that the federal partners met in early December. All are very active in flood recovery efforts and have provided summaries of what each office is doing in response. Results will be posted on LCBP website in the spring. Jeanne Voorhees is now the new chair of the Federal partners group. David asked that an email be sent out with a link to the summaries when they are posted. Kip described the agriculture-related MOU mentioned by David as both practical and symbolic of partnering; it includes a new position being developed to cover the specific action items of that MOU. NRCS has advocated for the Winooski River Flood Resilience initiative and is participating in a demonstration project in the Mad River watershed.

Brief Updates from Committees

VT CAC - Buzz Hoerr reported that the VT CAC Action Plan is complete and can be presented at a future Steering Committee meeting; it will first be presented to the VT legislature next month. The committee has accelerated the report preparation in order to present it to the legislature before the budget deliberations are complete. At the last meeting, Julie Moore presented Stone Environmental's Critical Source Analysis report to the LCBP - it was startling to see the location of critical sources so clearly. The CAC is concerned about funding for the USGS stream gauges.

NY CAC - Ron Jackson reported that the CAC has really focused on the stream gauge funding situation; one meeting was entirely devoted to that topic. He noted that gauges are critical and they do save lives. The Irene flood seemed to bring the attention to this issue, and the CAC hopes that long-term funding can be secured. Ron thanked Senator Leahy for his support and hoped that Senator Schumer also is engaged in seeking funds. Tom Berry noted that the two senators sent a joint letter to GLFC and are working together on this issue.

QC CAC – Martin Mimeault reported that Chantal d'Auteuil is moving to another job; this will be a big loss to the Corporation. Joanne Berube will replace her until someone else is found. The office is moving from Bedford to another location. Martin described a project in St Armand that Real has been working to fund. Martin invited members and staff to participate in a BGA forum to be held in Québec City on Feb 9th; it will include reports on nine BGA monitoring projects.

TAC – Breck Bowden reported that TAC met in December and reviewed the CSA Final report presented by Mike Winchell from Stone Environmental. TAC also voted on recommendations to rank proposed budget tasks for presentation to the Executive Committee in January.

HAPAC – Catherine Brooks reported on the work of the regional stakeholder groups (RSGs); they are county-based and make recommendations to the LCBP and HAPAC. The CVNHP is attempting to establish RSGs throughout the heritage area. Saratoga in Hudson Valley has applied to become an RSG and several other counties are developing proposals. Jim has been working on a region-wide wine trail that will link with similar programs in VT and NY. The North Country Chamber of Commerce and the LCBP are working together on interpretation resources for the Valcour Rest Area.

E&O – Buzz Hoerr reported that the *Watershed Matters* website tools are up and running as part of the LCBP website. A CBEI workshop will be held at St Mikes in March, and recruitment for the *Watershed in Every Classroom* course is underway. The LCBP website is going under revision through the next year. The *Don't P on Your Lawn* program within Vermont did not include signage in the past. Retailers requested this be added, so a new sign with a positive message relating to compliance with the new law has been created by the LCBP and is being distributed among retailers. This spring a new TV PSA on this topic will be produced. The LCBP Resource Room computers are being updated. The February and March *Love the Lake* presentations are again being scheduled.

Legislative Updates – Tom Berry reported that funding bills got passed in November, which was earlier than in past years, and included most programs in which the SC is interested. The FY12 EPA line for LCBP work is \$2.399M, and the Senator’s office is clarifying the details with the GLFC about the potential for \$3M. The Sea Lamprey control program continues to be the first priority for funding with GLFC support. The SC will review the final GLFC allocation for FY11 along with the draft EPA budget later in the meeting. Senator Leahy looks for the federal programs which are most important for the LCBP and supports those: EPA, NPS and GLFC are examples. The current Farm Bill expires at the end of July and if no new bill is on the floor by July 4th it probably won’t happen this year due to presidential elections. Michael Creasy is the new superintendent at Billings-Rockefeller Park. Christina Marts gave an overview of his credentials and experience, particularly with National Heritage Areas; he will be starting the end of February.

Manager’s Report – Bill Howland reported on the status of recent, ongoing, and scheduled LCBP Tasks. He also provided an update on FY11 and FY12 funding, and the process by which the draft budget was prepared. The Resource Room within ECHO at the Leahy Center received its 200,000 visitor during the late summer (out of 900,000 visitors to ECHO). The CSA project for the IJC has been completed; the core of that effort was the Stone Environmental report that will be presented later in this meeting. The report may be released by the IJC for public distribution in the near future. A special edition of the *Journal of Great Lakes Research*, with 17 papers on the outcome of a 2010 Lake Champlain Research Conference held by LCBP and the Lake Champlain Research Consortium (LCRC) will be published this spring. LCBP (with GLFC funds) and the LCRC are paying for this jointly. Funds have been secured for a Lake Champlain research conference in 2013.

Draft Budget Review: Bill explained the setup of the spreadsheet so the SC can review tasks and the budget narratives as homework tonight before tomorrow’s budget discussions. The EC met in December to review the draft budget recommendations, and then held a conference call workgroup meeting on January 6th to further consider task priorities to present to the Steering Committee. Bill was charged in that call with identifying key base budget tasks, and looking to see if any task costs could be reduced. Bill has identified base budget tasks and the spreadsheet includes proposed cost reductions for many tasks, with rationales. GLFC FY11 funded tasks have been included in the spreadsheet to clarify which tasks have funding from that source. The Steering Committee needs to provide budget guidance in the form of the prioritization or elimination or adjustments of tasks yet to be funded, to guide the contracting negotiations with funding agencies to follow. Tomorrow will determine what is likely to be funded by EPA and NPS (FY12); the remaining tasks also will be prioritized. The priority list will be used to inform the proposal for GLFC funds when they become available.

Presentations:

- *Spring Lake Champlain Flooding - 2011 (what happened)* by Susan Warren, VT DEC.
- *Current & Historical Management of Rivers (why we have some of the problems we face today)* by Mike Kline, VT DEC.
- *Identification of Critical Source Areas of Phosphorus in the Vermont Sector of the Missisquoi Basin* by Julie Moore, Stone Environmental.
- *Lake Champlain Basin Program- Quality Assurance Project Plans.* By Mike Jennings, NEIWPC.

LCBP Task Updates: Eric Howe presented a summary of progress on selected ongoing technical tasks, providing programmatic context for budget discussions. Jim Brangan presented a summary of progress on selected ongoing and recent heritage tasks, providing programmatic context for budget discussions.

LCBP 2011 Flood Workshops and Conference Planning: The Steering Committee discussed the LCBP's flood workshop and conference planning. A flood workshop will be hosted by Québec on February 6, 2012 at Hotel Gouvenor St Jean-sur-Richelieu. This event will be an opportunity for professionals from each jurisdiction to share information about flood causes, basic impact statistics, and jurisdictional response. This spring there will be a workshop in NYS to characterize the technical and policy issues that emerged and how to assure greater resilience to future floods. VT has completed a report to the governor (of information available at the time), the *Irene Flood Response*. The Flood Conference is being planned for early summer, tentatively on Monday June 4th and Tuesday, June 5th in Vermont. This conference is expected to include presentations about short and long term effects and responses, policy interests and potential actions to take to improve flood resilience throughout the Lake Champlain Basin. LCBP anticipates preparing a report for the Governors and Premier after the conference, perhaps by the end of summer.

The February 6th technical workshop will consider what happened and what was learned. The meeting will begin with an overview of 2011 flooding, followed by summaries from each jurisdiction. Panel discussions will describe infrastructure damages, ecosystem impacts, and human impacts. An invited speaker will be Bob Lent from USGS Water Science Center in Maine, who will talk about the last 100 years of climate and projections for the next 50 years. LCBP is arranging simultaneous French / English translations. The workgroup is not announced as a public event, though it is to be an open meeting. This workshop will inform planning for the following workshop in NY later in the spring.

Steering Committee members reviewed the charge and expectations for the workshops and conference. David and Daniel suggested invitees and the committee considered the scope of the effort. Dave T. discussed the perspective on ecosystem impacts of the flood and suggested it include or even emphasize the impacts on flood management practices and the nature of the response. Deb Markowitz noted that the primary objective is to figure out comprehensively what we can do basin-wide to increase flood resiliency and to develop policy recommendations where possible. Martin noted that the first workgroup is technical, the second is more focused on policy and management aspects, and the conference is intended to bring these two interests together. Mary suggested that the first session consider what happened ecologically and in terms of infrastructure impacts, the second session should focus on mitigation. Bob noted the importance to couple the discussion of mitigation strategies with recognition of the resources needed to implement them.

Thursday, January 19, 2012 Draft Minutes Meeting Reconvenes, Firehouse Gallery 2nd floor conference room

Steering Committee Members Present: John Krueger, Kip Potter, Marilyn Stephenson, Bob Stegemann, Catherine Brooks, Christina Marts, Gina Campoli, Martin Mimeault, Daniel LeBlanc, Jeanne Voorhees, Ron Jackson, Chuck Ross (chair), Kari Dolan (FOR David Mears), Buzz Hoerr,

Breck Bowden, Dave Tilton, Mario Paula (by phone); **Staff:** Bill Howland, Stephanie Strouse, Ryan Mitchell, Jim Brangan, Colleen Hickey, Eric Howe, Michaela Stickney, Fred Dunlap, Martin Mimeault, Mike Jennings, Clair Ryan; **Others present:** Lynne Hamjian (by phone), Eric Smeltzer, Herb Bergquist, Tom Berry, David Borthwick-Leslie

Chuck chaired the meeting on behalf of David Mears. He focused the agenda on the budget task prioritization, recognizing that after base budget tasks are accounted, about \$770,000 of EPA FY 2012 funds remain to be allocated. The Committee discussed several high priorities.

- Bob noted that NYS DEC needs funds a year ahead for budgeting, so requested that the Long Term Monitoring NYS line be increased by \$160,000 to cover the year from spring 2013 to spring 2014. (LCBP funding for 2012 - 2013 is already allocated, EPA FY11).
- Lynn noted uncertainty about 2013 funds and cautioned against stockpiling funds for the year after next. The Steering Committee agreed to allocate the funds as requested for the immediate budgeting purpose, and to re-examine if appropriate following future funding decisions.
- Kari proposed that because the E&O tasks listed are high LCBP priorities and it's difficult for the states to fund those projects - that they be combined as a high priority and the committee move on to prioritize other tasks proposed by TAC. The Steering Committee agreed.
- Bob noted the original proposal for two agronomists had been revised in the draft budget to one agronomist. He proposed adding into the job description or adding as a second position, a water engineer to help identify the impacts of flooding. This would help both NYS Ag and NYS DEC because they both are short staffed. By changing from an agronomist to a hydraulic engineer with agricultural background this position could provide assistance with compliance and enforcement issues - a high priority for NYS DEC.
- Kip discussed the Ag BMP task; last year this project was funded partially through about \$800,000 of NRCS-AGO funds matched with GLFC funds, resulting in 7 projects. The grant has been renewed at \$688,000, and again can only be accepted if match funds are provided; otherwise, the money will go back to Washington. We would like to continue these projects. The task needs \$300k to leverage the \$688k from AGO funds that we now know we'll get if we have match - this should be a high priority.
- Kari noted the importance of the task line for water chestnut funding at \$97,000. Buzz noted that the VT CAC concurs in order to not lose the progress to date.
- Gina spoke of the importance to VTrans of determining critical source areas in the urban landscape. Breck clarified the VT EPSCoR can not fund this task.
- Bill noted that residual funds have been identified that can cover the Boat Launch Steward task, so that will be taken care of in 2012.
- Marilyn noted that NRCS has no objection to a water engineer, but that the Agronomist position needs to remain as proposed, reflecting priorities of both NYS Ag and Mkts, and NRCS, working together.
- Bob noted the importance of the tasks relating to flood response and resiliency.
- Lynne noted that the BMP project fits well with TMDL and Missisquoi Bay work, and she would support the NY Agronomist position as described. If it changed to be an enforcement task it would be less certain that EPA would agree to provide funds for this kind of work.
- A question arose about the potential use of GLFC funds to cover the gauging shortfall. Tom clarified that after the \$67,000 is provided, we still may need nearly \$200,000 for the gauges.
- Jeanne and Lynne recommended against planning to use EPA funds for the USGS gauges, as

they are not an appropriate responsibility of the EPA. Tom agreed that USGS shouldn't be all on the EPA to fund, but noted that EPA has a vested interest in the TMDL for which the gauges are essential.

- The Steering Committee agreed to put the gauges as the top task priority without anticipating which funds would be applied to the task and without a dollar cost.
- John Krueger presented a revised package of heritage tasks that matched the anticipated funding available from the NPS. The committee accepted the prioritized task list as proposed.
- The Steering Committee discussed several other tasks and proposed spreadsheet adjustments.
- Ron proposed the Steering Committee prepare the prioritized list understanding that Bill would develop agreements with funding agencies based on the list where possible, but with some wiggle room to make adjustments. The Steering Committee agreed to that approach.

ACTION ITEM: Breck moved to approve the adjusted spreadsheet of tasks and amounts prioritized for funding as available. John seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote, with none opposed and no abstentions.

Chuck recommended that if Mary Watzin has further input after her arrival at midday, the group could decide to re-examine the list. Following lunch, Mary Watzin joined the committee meeting and Bill briefly reviewed the budget priorities voted by the committee before lunch. Mary noted her sense that the boat launch steward program and rapid response fund was more effective than the task to anticipate the next invading species. Mary pointed out that the hydrologic flooding model is very important and could be higher on the list. While she appreciated the option, Mary did not request revisiting the budget decisions on these tasks.

STATE OF THE LAKE 2012

Bill shared the SOL timeline begun in March, 2011 and what has been completed so far. He asked members to comment today, but also to send further comments in writing via e-mail. By March 15, the Steering Committee will review what will be in the report and soon after it will move to the graphic design stage. Eric Howe showed the current state of the report on-screen and circulated a number of figures. Committee members discussed graphics and content, particularly the phosphorus concentration information. Committee members felt it important to be judicious in the use of colors to depict the state of the lake itself, rather than simply the degree of compliance with the TMDL or other standards; showing P-concentration is the more important idea. Bill asked members to provide comments no later than January 30th. Staff will refine and return drafts to the Executive and Steering Committee meetings for further discussion.

Meeting adjourned 3pm.