

# 2015 Lake Champlain Action Plan

The Vermont Citizens Advisory Committee (VTCAC) on Lake Champlain's Future recommends these priorities to protect and restore Lake Champlain.

## Clean Water Fund

**Introduction:** Reliable funding for a comprehensive array of water quality projects is essential to protect and restore Vermont's rivers, inland lakes and ponds, and Lake Champlain. The state must appropriate annually a minimum of \$10 million to invest in healthy streams and clean lakes that reflect our shared responsibility for waters we rely on for drinking water, recreation and economic prosperity.

**The state must:** Establish by statute, a dedicated Clean Water Fund – sustained by not less than \$10 million annually in state resources – to support water quality improvement projects and strengthen regulatory, enforcement and technical assistance capacity.

These funds are essential to drawing down available federal resources, and will be allocated to state agencies and through grant and loan programs to watershed groups, farmers, municipalities, small businesses, and private landowners. This fund must also be capable of receiving private donations and impact fees.

## Agricultural Compliance and Enforcement

**Introduction:** Agricultural regulation requires significantly increased staffing levels to support permit and program compliance, as required by the Lake Champlain Phosphorus Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) phosphorus reduction plan and the Clean Water Act. Current resources committed by the state to address agricultural compliance and enforcement are inadequate. Existing permits must be reviewed to assure full implementation of sustainable agricultural practices that protect land and waterways, and ultimately Lake Champlain.



Cover cropping is a Best Management Practice to reduce soil erosion on tilled crop lands.

**The state must:** Reduce tax benefits for Current Use Program participants who do not comply with Acceptable Agricultural Practices (AAPs).

All Vermont landowners engaged in agricultural activities, including Current Use Program participants, are required to follow AAPs. Forest landowners enrolled in Current Use are required to follow Acceptable Management Practices (AMPs) for sustainable timber harvesting, and failure to do so may penalize their program eligibility. The same penalty risk must be applied to farm landowners enrolled in Current Use who do not comply with the AAPs.

**The state must:** Authorize risk-based agricultural runoff permitting by statute, rules and fees.

Agricultural regulation would benefit from a risk-based approach similar to stormwater construction permitting

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which considers project size, soils and slope, location within an impaired watershed, and other elements. Projects are deemed high or low risk for stormwater runoff, and appropriate compliance monitoring is assigned. Developing this new permit framework for agriculture will include determining how it complements existing state and federal permits.

**The state must: Remove a multiple farm operation permit loophole.**

An existing loophole allows owners of multiple Medium Farm Operations (MFO) to manage these farms separately rather than classifying them as a Large Farm Operation (LFO). LFO permits are specific to individual farms and address issues such as water discharges, odor, noise, traffic, and pests. MFO permits are general permits where owners demonstrate in writing compliance with the list of required practices. Eliminating this loophole will further reduce agricultural impacts by increasing permit review of larger operations under single management regardless of whether they are geographically contiguous.

## Human Health and Ecosystem Protection

**Introduction:** Blue-green algae potentially pose risks to human health. Some concentrated blue-green algae compounds may produce rashes through skin contact, allergy symptoms through inhalation or gastrointestinal illness through ingestion. Under some conditions, blue-green algae may produce toxins. Investing in additional blue-green algae monitoring, mapping and outreach in recreational waters will reduce public health risks by enhancing the existing state and volunteer led effort to improve blue-green algae bloom and risk data.

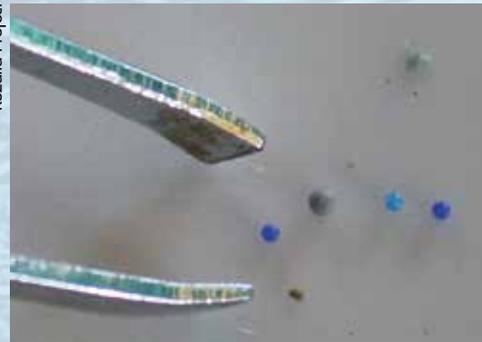
**The state must: Invest in revised drinking water plant operational response plans to better inform the public about risks from toxins.**



A paint-like blue-green algae bloom in Lake Champlain.

Currently, if toxins from blue-green algae are detected in finished drinking water, the drinking water plant issues a DO NOT DRINK notice to prevent potential health risks from the water. In 2015, the US Environmental Protection Agency will issue guidance for some blue-green algae toxins which the Vermont Department of Health can use to calculate Vermont Health Advisories for these toxins in drinking water. An operational response plan would apply to any exceedance of these health advisories and would help water systems to operationally manage potential toxins in drinking water.

**Introduction:** Certain personal care products contain antimicrobial compounds and microplastics. Triclosan, is an antibacterial and antimicrobial compound found in over-the-counter soaps, toothpastes, and other personal care products.



Plastic microbeads from a Lake Champlain beach. This compound impacts naturally occurring microorganisms essential to ecosystem health. Microbeads are tiny (smaller than 1 millimeter) plastic particles found in cosmetics, skin cleansers and some medications. These, and many other personal care products, often elude wastewater treatment processes and pose risks to our waters, environment and health.

**The state must: Ban the sale of personal care products containing microbeads and triclosan.**

### VTCAC Members

- Julie Moore, Chair, Middlesex, Water Resources Engineer
- Lori Fisher, Vice-Chair, Williston, Lake Champlain Committee
- Sen. Claire Ayer, Addison County, Huntington, Buels Gore
- Eric Clifford, Starksboro, Dairy Farmer
- James Ehlers, Colchester, Business Executive
- Robert Fischer, Montpelier, Water Resource Recovery Facility, Chief Operator
- Paul Hansen, Alburgh, Business Owner
- Rep. Bob Krebs, South Hero
- Sen. Ginny Lyons, Chittenden County
- Alex MacDonald, Lincoln, Builder
- Mark Naud, South Hero, Attorney
- Denise Smith, St. Albans, Friends of Northern Lake Champlain
- Rep. Kate Webb, Shelburne
- Sheri Young, Orwell, Septic Design & Environmental Consulting

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