

**Lake Champlain Steering Committee**  
**Draft Meeting Summary**

**May 9, 2017**

Orpailleur Vineyard/ Vignoble de l'Orpailleur  
Dunham, Quebec

**9:30 AM Arrival and Networking**

**10:00 AM Meeting Convened** – *Québec Chair - Daniel Leblanc, MDDELCC*

- Introductions around the room, conference call participants:
- Members: Daniel Leblanc (QC MDDELCC), Bob Stegemann (NYSDEC), Emily Boedecker (VTDEC), Mel Cote (USEPA R1), Pierre Leduc (QC CAC), Andrew Milliken (USFWS), Alyson Eastman (VT Agency of Ag), Dan Dutcher (VTRANS), Vicky Drew (USDA VT), Mike Winslow (TAC Chair), Buzz Hoerr (E&O Chair), Daria Mazey (USACE), John Krueger (HAPAC Chair), Renee Rouleau (Mayor, St George de Clarenceville), Steve Garceau (QC FWP), Vic Putman (NYCAC). Phone: Mario Paula (USEPA R2), Christina Marts (NPS), Lori Fisher (VTCAC), Breck Bowden (LC Sea Grant)
- Guests: Tom Berry (Sen Leahy's office), Nathalie Provencher (Parliament office), François Lavalley (Parliament office), Simon Lajeunesse (MRC Brome-Missisquoi), Henrique Martin (OBVBM), Michele Laliberte (laVoixdel'Est newspaper), François Charbonneau (Village of St Armand)
- Staff: LCBP: Eric Howe, Jim Brangan, Colleen Hickey, Ryan Mitchell, Elizabeth Lee, Matt Vaughan, Meg Modley Gilbertson, Kathy Jarvis; Ron Poltak (NEIWPC), Susan Sullivan (NEIWPC), Pete LaFlamme (VTDEC), Bethany Sargent (VTDEC), Fred Dunlap (NYSDEC); MaryJo Feuerbach (USEPA R1)
  
- Martin Mimeault provided a welcome to the group and to the Orpailleur Vineyard.
  
- Draft Meeting Agenda review: No changes to the agenda proposed.

**ACTION ITEM: February 2017 Steering Committee minutes approval**

- Buzz motioned to approve minutes as submitted; second by John Krueger. All in favor, no abstentions.
  
- Public Comments: – no comments provided.

**Technical Presentation:** Reduction of erosion in the Pike River Watershed and other water quality projects in the Brome-Missisquoi region, *Simon Lajeunesse, Coordonnateur régional des cours d'eau / Regional Water Courses Management Coordinator, MRC Brome-Missisquoi*

**Request for Steering Committee membership** – *Daniel Leblanc, Meeting Chair*

The Steering Committee was briefed on the outcome of the discussion of this subject at the Executive Committee meeting on May 2, 2017.

Susan Sullivan explained the position of NEIWPC and their reasoning for a formal voting membership on the Lake Champlain Steering Committee. She cited two specific reasons, including the retirement of former LCBP Director Bill Howland and the hiring process for that position, and the NEIWPC indirect rate and Steering Committee responses to this rate. Susan

cited a precedent for NEIWPCC membership on boards of other interstate programs such as Long Island Sound, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program, and others. She feels that if NEIWPCC had a voting seat on the Lake Champlain Steering Committee, this would improve communication between NEIWPCC and the Steering Committee.

Daniel stated that the request was discussed at the last Executive Committee. The Executive Committee concurs that the relationship with NEIWPCC is very important. However, the resolution of that conversation was that NEIWPCC is currently ineligible for voting membership on this committee in accordance with the MOU between VT, NY and QC. Buzz moved to accept the decision of the Executive Committee to not add NEIWPCC to the Steering Committee membership. John Krueger seconded the motion. All in favor; EPA R1 and R2 abstained.

Daniel said that the discussion may continue when the MOU is renegotiated. Bob Stegemann said he feels it is very important during the interim to ensure NEIWPCC is involved with the Steering Committee even if not a voting member. Ron Poltak said that the commitment is mutual and feels in the context of this organization and as a function of the Commission to take a hard look at the constituency out in the field and their stand on water quality issues. As the Lake Champlain Steering Committee looks toward the future, we will need to strengthen our approval of in-lake water quality issues. NEIWPCC will be at the table and play a more active, committed role. Emily said that she is glad the issue has been brought up and will be included when renegotiating the MOU.

### **Brief Jurisdictional Updates**

- **New York**- There has been good action on capital developments on water infrastructure. These applications due June 23<sup>rd</sup>. Million Dollar Beach in Lake George has been closed frequently in the past due to high levels of coliform. Report now available on what the sources of this contamination were.
- **Québec** – There have been major changes related to fisheries, including a new regulation on using bait fish. Need to determine the impact this will have on anglers. Martin Mimeault circulated fact sheets on these new regulations.
- **Vermont** – DEC is working on a permit for Class 4 roads and a new stormwater management manual will go into effect July 1, 2017. There will be an increase in funds for SFY18 to support implementation of the TMDL and Act 64. Preparing for the first of four SFY18 ecosystem restoration grant rounds. Anticipate an RFP release in May for river corridor easements, standard ecosystem restoration grants, and a new block grant program to provide funds for implementation of new Clean Water Direct Aid programs
- **US Federal Partners**
  - EPA – MaryJo reported that she is happy that LCBP will be level-funded in FY17. She will be working with her counterparts to complete the grant applications before the end of August. Mario reported that EPA R2 Working on geographic response plans in NY for 15 locations. Now next phase is developing protocols based on the site visits.
  - USFWS – Andrew provided an update on the temporary sea lamprey barrier installed on Morpion Stream, near the confluence with Pike River. This is the third year the barrier has been in place. It is in place for three months each spring to prevent migratory sea lamprey from reaching spawning habitat in Morpion Stream. The barrier has been modified and is designed to not impede flow and reduce localized flooding. There is a new effort underway with NYSDEC and restoration of sauger, as there is a strong interest in restoration of that population in Lake Champlain. Initial

efforts are looking at possibility of using adults collected from the St Lawrence River as brood stock. USFWS is putting more effort into habitat restoration for Atlantic salmon and part of that effort is aligning the program with the clean water efforts of VT DEC. Every year in April the Northeast Fish and Wildlife Conference is held, and next year it will be in Burlington.

- USACE- Daria reported that USACE and LCBP held an informational meeting for the USACE WRDA Section 542 program at the LCBP office yesterday. This is not grant program, but interested parties can apply for cost-share for projects. Daria highlighted the Bartlett Brook north project – this is a 542 stormwater treatment project that is ongoing and due to be done in September. The 542 program can be design-only or design and construct.
- NPS – Christina said also that the CVNHP also is looking at level funding for the coming year, and NPS is working on the cooperative agreement with NEIWPC to continue our work. Christina is working with Jim to pull together a July summit of all NPS programs in the Heritage Area region, including river and trails programs.
- USDA NRCS- Vicky – the new Secretary of the Interior has established a priority to focus on customer service for USDA programs. NRCS VT side continues to direct 75% of EQIP money to farmers in priority watersheds. St Albans Bay watershed has had great interest but the other three watersheds have been below participation targets. However, across whole Champlain watershed NRCS has a backlog of applications which is encouraging. USDA projected to have 24% decrease in budget nationwide for FY18. Most of \$13M in Vermont is allocated.
- **Legislative Updates** – Tom Berry reported that the FFY17 US budget has been approved. The FFY17 budget is more or less level-funded for Champlain programs from FFY16. FFY18 is unknown. The Skinny budget laid out priorities, and another version supposed to be out May 21<sup>st</sup> and will be discussed by Congress. IJC is doing plan of study looking at flooding impacts and how to deal with those. Letter of reference is required from both countries to initiate work by the IJC. US letter of reference out there but not signed by the State Department yet. Leahy’s office has been pushing to get this letter signed and sent to IJC. Would be good for the States and Quebec to contact the State Department and ask that that letter be signed and forwarded on. Tom said he is glad to see heightened participation of NEIWPC. Daniel said the Lake Champlain – Richelieu River Study Board will present the draft project outline to the IJC Commissioners in June. Renee likes that IJC is working with US and Canada on projects. She thought this would be a good time to ask the Canadian government to bring money in for the LCBP. Daniel said that the current Lake Champlain Steering Committee membership and operating structure does not reflect a federal Canadian role.
- QC CAC –OBVBM is in the hiring process for two students for boat launch stewards (LCBP-funded) and two for riparian buffer zone characterization projects. Mr Paradis is working with mayors in the region to identify short-term solutions to improve water quality of Missisquoi Bay and reduce the frequency of cyanobacteria blooms. An Action Plan was given to the government identify what can be done to help with water quality requirements. Also, the VT/QC agreement needs to be renewed for Phosphorus reduction. Targets in the new agreement will be tighter than before because of the TMDL. The CAC has submitted a letter to Minister of Agriculture requesting specific funds for Missisquoi Bay. The current programs cover 75 percent of project costs, and this additional funding would seek to cover up to 90% of project costs.
- NY CAC – Vic reported that the CAC has not met since the February Steering Committee meeting. The group is concerned about the FFY18 budget and how it will affect LCBP. They

have invited Congresswoman Stefanik for a discussion of the issue. In addition, a resolution supporting federal funding to support the LCBP was drafted. The OFA signing ceremony will be on June 19<sup>th</sup> and the CAC will attend and support the governors. The CAC is planning on renting a water chestnut harvesting boat for Invasive Species Week.

- VTCAC – Lori reported that they have had presentations by Eric Howe on OFA, state personnel reports on water programs and Congressional delegation reports on budget cuts at other meetings. Last night ANR reported on federal budget cuts. Submitted letter to General Assembly supporting the clean water report. With NY and QC partners want to draft a letter outlining the concerns for the federal budget cuts and water protection efforts. Planning a day long retreat to outline the next year goals. In contact with Governor’s office for new appointment for two vacancies and renewal of expired memberships.
- E&O – Buzz reported that this committee has not met since the February Steering Committee meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for June and will have two vacancies to fill. Ryan is getting ready to release the next video segment on salmon in schools, in particular highlighting schools in Willsboro and Westport who are working with Trout Unlimited. The Healthy Soils campaign is moving along well – this group is now working with six organizations, as well as the City of Burlington and the Kent Delord House. Love the Lake series presented to 205 attendees over 5 different evenings in Grand Isle this winter.
- HAPAC – John Krueger cited the history of the Gunboat Spitfire on Lake Champlain, and the need for a future dialogue at the Steering Committee on a restoration effort for this historical landmark.
- TAC – Mike Winslow reported that TAC has met three times since the February Steering Committee meeting. The group has been busy reviewing workplans for the summer field season, including workplans for a new land use/land cover analysis by UVM and projects on Ag BMP projects by Stone Environmental. This afternoon, the Steering Committee will consider two Records of Decision for the Enhanced BMP RFP and the a study to look at phosphorus in tile drainage systems. TAC Voted 10-4 to move forward with this project and the Steering Committee discuss this decision later today.
- Manager’s Report – LCBP Staff
  - Letter of Support from the three jurisdictions for support of FFY18 funding for Lake Champlain and LCBP by the states of New York and Vermont and the Province of Québec.
  - *Opportunities for Action* is scheduled for release on June 19, to be held in Crown Point, NY at 1 pm. The Steering Committee approved OFA in February, and the Executive Committee finalized the document in March.
  - Eric recognized Ron Poltak for his support of LCBP, and wished Ron well in his upcoming retirement from NEIWPC. Ron thanked everyone.
  - Jim reported that there are now drafts of a series of wayside exhibits for a heritage trail through St George de Clarenceville.
  - Meg reported that the boat launch steward season will be getting underway in a couple of weeks.

### **FY17 LCBP Draft Budget Task Review, FY18 budget priorities**

Susan reported that the new NEIWPC Indirect Rate for FFY18 has been submitted to Washington for a decrease to 19.5% from 20.0%. They have not yet heard back on an approval of this rate change. Susan explained that this rate applies to all staff, travel, and supplies, and to all subawards and subcontracts that are under \$100,000. This policy is set between NEIWPC and EPA using an EPA process, and that it applies to all funding sources.

NEIWPCC put together a 5-year financing forecast, based on 3/31/17 cash balance figures. This is the first time this has been done for LCBP. Based on this, LCBP finances look good until mid-2020, and this was assuming that FY17 and future funding was zeroed out (worst-case scenario). This coincides with the new presidential elections. Current funding is mostly from EPA now, but could change. This is not fiscal year budget rather than funds available to spend.

Eric suggested forming an ad hoc committee to look at the current funding structure that LCBP has and what is available for identifying other funding opportunities. There was some discussion around this concept, and in the end the group generally felt as if this might be a good option to explore and suggested Eric recruit volunteers to participate on a subcommittee to begin to shape a policy for identifying other funding opportunities to pursue. John Krueger, Buzz Hoerr, Pierre Leduc, and Susan Sullivan volunteered to participate. Tom suggested that the initial charge for this group might be to identify opportunities for federal or quasi-federal funds rather than private sources.

### **Discussion of FY18 budget priorities for Heritage and Technical programs**

Matt provided a review of the TAC budget process and the priorities that TAC discussed that would be highlighted in the new Request for Pre-Proposals to be released this fall, following the process that was approved by the Steering Committee in February 2017. There also are “core” projects on a parallel track. These are projects that have historically been considered as the highest priority technical projects, including the Lake Champlain Long-Term Monitoring Program and a few others. TAC identified four priority areas that would be explicitly called out in the Request for Pre-Proposals. These include innovative pilot or demonstration projects that reduce nutrient loading to Lake Champlain; Research or implementation projects that use LCBP-funded or other publicly available datasets to create outputs that lead to improved water quality in the Lake Champlain basin; projects that improve diversity of native aquatic and riparian species in the Lake Champlain basin, and projects that research or control sources of contaminants in the Lake Champlain basin.

There was some further discussion about specific grant categories and how much funding should be allocated for each category; in the end the group agreed that the four categories proposed by TAC would be highlighted as priorities in the request for pre-proposals and there would not be a specific amount of funding set aside for each category, as we do not know what our funding availability will be for FY18 at this point. The Steering Committee charged TAC with clarifying some of the language in the request and the Executive Committee would approve the RFPP prior to release in late September 2017.

### **Grant Award Decision: Evaluation of Effectiveness of Selected Conservation Practices in Reducing Phosphorus Loss from Tile-Drained Agricultural Fields (15 min)**

Mike Winslow move to enter executive session; Dan Dutcher seconded. All in favor.

ACTION ITEM: Enter into Executive Session to review:

Grant Application Review

Return to Open Session

ACTION ITEM: Approval of Record of Decision

Buzz Hoerr motioned to NOT accept the record of decision as presented and hold the budgeted funds for another project. Dan Dutcher seconded. Motion carried; Vicky Drew and Steve Garceau abstained.

**4:00 PM      Adjourn**