

Lake Champlain Steering Committee Meeting

Tuesday, September 11, 2018

[Euro-Spa Wellness Resort](#)

455 Rang de l'Église Sud, Saint-Ignace-de-Stanbridge, QC J0J 1Y0, Canada

Draft Agenda

9:30 AM Arrive, meet and greet (*coffee etc. provided*)

Committee Members: Daniel Leblanc (MDDELCC), Pierre Leduc (QC CAC), Emily Boedecker (VT ANR), MaryJo Feuerbach (US EPA Region 1), Bryan Dore (US EPA Region 1), Andrew Milliken (USFWS), Craig DiGiammarino (VTRANS), Buzz Hoerr (E&O Committee Chair), Koon Tang (NYSDEC), John Krueger (HAPAC Chair), Vicky Drew (NRCS), Laura DiPietro (VAAF), Renee Rouleau (Clarenceville Mayor), Mario Paula (EPA Region 2; phone), Vic Putman (VT CAC; phone), Lori Fisher (LCC; phone), Daria Mazey (USACE; phone), Pete LaFlamme (VTDEC; phone)

Staff: Eric Howe, Jim Brangan, Colleen Hickey, Ryan Mitchell, Elizabeth Lee, Matt Vaughan, Ellen Kujawa, Jane Ceraso (NEIWPC; phone), Fred Dunlap (NYSDEC; phone), Bethany Sargent (VTDEC; phone)

Guests: Jordyn Geller (VTDEC; phone), Frederic Chouinard (OBVBM; phone), Tom Berry (Senator Leahy's office; phone)

10:00 Meeting Begins *Daniel Leblanc, Chair*

- Welcome and Introductions
- Draft Meeting Agenda review
- ACTION ITEM: April 2018 Steering Committee meeting minutes approval
 - **Buzz moved to approve the April meeting summary as submitted. Second by John Krueger. All in favor; motion is carried. No abstentions.**

10:05 Public Comments – none offered.

10:15 Presentations from recent grant recipients (*Frederic Chouinard and Pierre Leduc, OBVBM*)

- Frederic reviewed two recent OBVBM grants supported by LCBP. Their Boat Launch Steward Program operated this past summer as the second season for this program. The grant was for \$16,000 to support two part-time stewards located at launches in Philipsburg and Venise-en-Quebec. The stewards connected with 520 people at Philipsburg and 2,000 at Venice-en-Quebec (not all were launching boats). The 2017 field season also supported two staff to survey agricultural riparian buffer strips. The regulation here is for 1-m buffer strips. The riparian agents contacted 121 riparian landowners and many of the banks were plowed right up to the river banks, including application of pesticides. In 2018, the OBVBM is doing a cost benefit analysis to reduce phosphorus loads to the Rock River sub-watershed by 40%. Project will be a modeling effort to determine how to reach this goal. OBVBM will be working with Aubert Michaud at IRDA to complete this project and then use the tool to work with landowners to identify places where they can install projects to reduce phosphorus loading.
 - Pierre Leduc requests data sharing for the riparian buffer strip project. Frederic will look into the feasibility of sharing data and will need to ask towns for permission.
- Pierre Leduc reviewed the bloom conditions in Missisquoi Bay and the Rock River this summer. Blooms have been consistent there since August 5. Pierre reviewed phosphorus trends from the 2015 State of the Lake report with the IJC Technical Advisory Committee on water quality. Marc

Simoneau from QC MDDELCC also reviewed trend data for Quebec contributions to Missisquoi Bay, demonstrating that some progress was made in reducing phosphorus loading until about 2007. There is some progress at reducing phosphorus loading at low flows, but there remains a lot of phosphorus coming into the lake during high flow events, enough to mask the positive results at low flow conditions. Pierre also noted that they have identified goals for reducing phosphorus loads across the different land use sectors, and across agricultural land uses to reduce load into Missisquoi Bay. This may require significant changes in the social structure and approach to land use, particularly with respect to agriculture.

- Andrew Milliken asked if there are programs similar to US federal programs to incentivize farms to take certain croplands out of production. Pierre responded that there are some programs like that, and several farms have elected to remove their crops from floodplains and were compensated for this. He estimated 13 hectares has been recruited into this program.
- MaryJo asked about the portion of the watershed that is in corn and whether this has increased. Corn land has been increasing, although there is now a regulation in place prohibiting the conversion of forest lands to crops, but hayland has been largely converted to corn. There is a regulation in Quebec requiring that the farm owner must have enough land to spread all of the manure that their animals produce. The more animals the farmers have the more crop land they own, and cornfields can accommodate more manure application than hayfields.

10:30

Brief Jurisdictional Updates (NY, QC, VT, US Fed Partners)

- VT ANR - Emily reviewed the Vermont Grant-in-Aid program, with a focus on rural road improvements from a water quality project. This new innovative program will receive a national award. The 2018 funding report has been submitted to the Vermont legislature. Vermont Phosphorus Innovation Challenge is up and running to recruit groups with new ideas and technologies to reduce phosphorus loading. Announcements on these proposals will be out next week. The LaPlatte River wetland system has been designated as a Class 1 wetland system. The Trust for Public Land has been evaluating the Return on Investment for land conservation. This study found that restoration and conservation of wetland returned the greatest value on investment, primarily for flood storage. Additional updates were provided in hardcopy (see attachment to this meeting summary).
 - [2018 Report on Federal Funding Related to Water Quality Improvement Efforts in Vermont](#) (August 31, 2018)
 - [Vermont Class I Wetlands](#)
 - [Trust for Public Land report on Vermont's Return on Investment in Land Conservation](#) (September 2018)
- NYSDEC – Koon Tang reported that as he is stepping in today, his goal is to support Bob Stegemann and Fred Dunlap. Koon noted that NYSDEC has allocated additional staff resources to work on the Champlain basin. NYSDEC will be conducting some pilot tests to monitor whether the new de-icing salt application strategy is reducing salt intrusion into local wells. Additional updates were provided in hardcopy.
- Quebec MDDELCC – Daniel Leblanc reported that he is working to refill the Quebec Lake Champlain Coordinator position recently vacated as a result of Martin Mimeault's retirement. Daniel hopes to have someone finalized by October. Daniel followed up on his updates from the April Steering Committee meeting. New laws proposed around water quality at that time were to go into effect on December 1. However, the government received many public comments on these new regulations, so the Quebec government decided to analyze these comments and provide a recommendation for the

new Quebec following their election on October 1. In the last budget, MDDELCC received \$240 million for water quality work. Some of this funding included support for the IJC flood mitigation reference work over the next few years. The Missisquoi Bay MOU agreement with Vermont is on hold until after the Quebec government election.

- USFWS – Andrew Milliken reported that the sea lamprey treatment program is kicking off this week and will rotate around the northern NY tributaries. Trapping of sea lamprey has been successful including the temporary barrier in Notre-Dame-de-Stanbridge. The USFWS Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge is exploring cultivation of wild rice for waterfowl. The low water this year prevented waterfowl from accessing the wild rice patties, but has been beneficial for shorebirds. Andrew also highlighted recent wetland restoration efforts including a 500-acres wetland restoration effort in the southern Otter Creek portion of the watershed (Brandon area). Andrew noted that the International Joint Commission is looking into wetland restoration opportunities for flood mitigation.
- USDA NRCS – Vicky Drew reported that they are waiting on the current US Farm Bill, which is in development by both houses of US Congress. Both versions call for changes to the EQIP program. VT NRCS received about \$16 million last year for EQIP work and anticipated a similar funding level. NRCS is able to refill positions again, so are actively filling 17 positions in Vermont to help push technical assistance to producers. NRCS has 33,000 acres of cover crop planned. Several waste storage projects have been implemented and 9 more are planned.
- EPA R1 – Mel Cote recognized Bryan Dore as the new EPA R1 Lake Champlain Coordinator. EPA R1 expedited the FY18 grant to VT ANR earlier this summer and should have the NEIWPC award in place this week. EPA R1 Administrator Alex Dunn has been nominated to an EPA position in the Washington DC area. Deb Szaro will serve as the acting Regional Administrator until the position is refilled.
- EPA R2 – Mario reported that they should have the FY18 award in place with NYSDEC this week.
- USACE – Daria Mazey reported that the Champlain Canal Barrier study is underway. There are three pending new projects for Section 542. Two are in the final stages of approval before they move forward. A third proposal was submitted by Trout Unlimited recently for aquatic organism passage improvements on the Mettowee River in the Dorset, VT area. This project likely will move forward earlier next year. USACE Headquarters has prepared a model Project Partnership Agreement for design assistance that will delegate approval of these agreements to the regional office. This should expedite project approval process by several months. Still waiting for a similar model for construction projects and for Headquarters approval of the General Management Plan. Overall funding for Section 542 is at \$3.5 million appropriated; all of these funds have been spent or are soon-to-be obligated. New projects (after the Trout Unlimited project) will require a new appropriation, and there is strong justification for new funding.

11:05

Legislative Update

- Tom Berry (Senator Leahy) credited the USACE for their efforts to expedite their process for project approval. Congress is in very good shape to approve spending bills by the end of the month. The Energy and Water bill (includes USACE) might be approved by next week. Interior Bill (includes EPA and NPS) also should be in place by October 1. State and Foreign Operations bill likely will be delayed to later this fall (includes IJC, GLFC, SeaGrant). The USACE Section 542 program may receive an appropriation this year. The USACE program that supports water chestnut management will also likely be funded again this year. The Interior Bill includes the EPA account for LCBP and is funded in the House Bill at \$8.399 million, courtesy of

Cong. Stefanik and Welch efforts. The Senate bill identifies this account at \$11 million. The USFWS funding for sea lamprey control is funded at \$500,000 in the Senate bill. The GLFC account is supported in the Senate bill at \$7 million (up from \$5 million in FY18). The International Joint Commission also is funded at \$1 million to continue work on the flood mitigation study. The US Department of State has reported that the FY19 water quality work can be supported with existing base funds and will not require an additional appropriation for this work. Lake Champlain Sea Grant is likely to receive \$1 million. Farm Bill likely will not be approved by the end of September. The National Heritage Area program will likely be level funded with FY18.

11:15

Advisory Committee Updates CAC: QC, NY, VT; TAC, E&O, HAPAC

- Quebec CAC - Pierre deferred to his report earlier in the agenda.
- NY CAC – no report, as the group has not met since the last Steering Committee meeting.
- VT CAC – Lori reported that the VT CAC has had officer elections and are hoping to fill two additional board member positions. They have done some preliminary work on the next Citizen’s Action Plan. They are working with LCBP staff and partners to host a series of public meetings on the new State of the Lake report this fall. See handout attached to this meeting summary for additional information.
- Renee Rouleau – Maire Rouleau reviewed the two IJC studies with the group. She thanked Jim Brangan for his help with heritage programs in Clarenceville. Action Lac Champlain is an active Facebook page that highlights water quality efforts in the Bay. There is some research in the area looking at interplanting rows of trees with agricultural crops to determine if the trees help retain soil and nutrients. This is a very large project in Quebec. She also noted that on September 16th, a cultural heritage event will be held to celebrate the Clarenceville church’s 200th anniversary.
- TAC – Matt Vaughan reported on TAC activities. Mike Winslow has stepped down as TAC chair due to other professional commitments but will retain his TAC membership. Bill Ardren, USFWS has been filling in this role since last spring but does not have the time to continue as Chair. The Steering Committee will consider a nomination for Chair later in this agenda. Additional updates were provided in hardcopy (see attachment to this meeting summary).
- Education & Outreach – Buzz reported that E&O last met in June to review the FY18 funded tasks. Scheduling next meeting to discuss FY19 budget priorities and committee membership. Colleen added that the 2018 State of the Lake report is now available online in French. The E&O team also is working the Friends of the Saranac River Trail to develop a series of Wayside exhibits. Additional updates were provided in hardcopy (see attachment to this meeting summary).
- HAPAC – John Kreuger – As Jim has prepared a written report, John used his time to discuss the events of 1814. More than 14,000 British soldiers were stationed this side of the border, much larger than the opposing US force. By September 6th, they occupied Plattsburgh and seized all land north of the Saranac River, waiting for the arrival of the British Navy. Only 3,500 American soldiers were present, but the American Navy was approximately the same size as the British; the American Navy Commander had studied Benedict Arnold’s Valcour Island strategy and employed it off of Cumberland Head, forcing the British army to engage in short range combat. This is the last major naval engagement between two English-speaking forces. The British fleet is completely destroyed, and as a result the British army is forced to retreat, and the war is ended at the Treaty of Ghent.

11:30

Director’s Report – LCBP staff

- Eric Howe noted that Breck Bowden sends his regrets in his absence, but wanted the Steering Committee to know that LCSG has official approved as an Institute and received its first institute-level appropriation. Former LCBP Director Bill Howland will be receiving the EPA's lifetime achievement award tomorrow. LCBP Development Committee met this summer to discuss possible funding options outside of Congressional appropriations. Jim and the HAPAC will be holding a heritage summit in Vermont in November. LCBP will be co-hosting the 2019 NALMS meeting in Burlington. Further updates are available in print in your binders.

11:45 LCBP Office relocation survey– Eric Howe

- Eric Howe reviewed the office relocation PowerPoint shown to the Steering Committee in April; Matt Vaughan provided a case study of the possibility of moving into the Blodgett Property in Burlington.
 - Renee Rouleau asked whether there are any links between LCBP and UVM such as course overlap?
 - Eric: LCBP funds several UVM projects but there is no formal organizational link between the two institutions.
 - Pierre Leduc asked why staff ranked the colocation of meeting space so highly.
 - Eric: Having meeting space makes coordination of events much easier for staff – printing, food, setup, phones, etc.

12:15 LUNCH (Provided)

1:00 FY19 LCBP Budget Process LCBP Staff

- FY19 Requests for Pre-Proposals (RFPP) process
- FY19 HAPAC RFPP Priorities
 - Jim Brangan provided an overview of the HAPAC's pre-proposal timeline and priorities for the coming year: passage of the 19th amendment, and the 250th anniversary of the Battle of Valcour Island and the gunboat Spitfire.
 - Pierre Leduc: In the Development Committee meeting, we discussed the possibility of private funding. The Heritage and Education and Outreach programs seem to be the most viable programs to receive private funding. Are you planning to explore these options this year?
 - Jim: No, probably not this year, though this may be a possibility for the future. The heritage grants provide an enormous amount of match as is.
 - **ACTION: Motion to approve the HAPAC RFPP priorities by Buzz. Second by John Krueger. All in favor; motion is carried. No abstentions.**
- FY19 Technical Core Projects
 - Ellen Kujawa presented the core project proposals: long-term monitoring project, enhanced BMP projects, AIS rapid response fund, boat launch steward program, cyanobacteria monitoring program, and water chestnut management program. In addition, she presented the WWTF phosphorus optimization project, which was added by the states of Vermont and New York to the core projects list.
 - Koon Tang provided background on the proposed WWTF project.

- Tom Berry asked how this project compares to Vermont’s Rural Water program; Koon and Emily noted that this program would build upon and complement the work of Vermont Rural Water.
 - Pierre Leduc asked why this project was not entered via the RFP process as others had been.
 - Koon Tang: This is important enough to be an LCBP core project because both states think it will have an immediate positive effect. In addition, state governments are the only organizations who will be able to ensure proper implementation of the project.
 - Emily Boedecker: For a relatively low input of funds, we would get significant results. Where this has occurred so far, larger towns have a higher level of technical support. We have many small communities in Vermont and New York who could also benefit.
 - Andrew Milliken noted that while this seems like a high priority effort, it should have competed with other high priority efforts in an RFP. LCBP and the Steering Committee get far more information from an application to a competitive process.
 - Vicky Drew encouraged the states to think about how this type of program has been paid for in the past, whether it will be a short-term or ongoing need, and what LCBP’s responsibility to pay for this is, compared to the states’ responsibility to manage WWTFs.
 - Buzz Hoerr stated that LCBP’s responsibility is not to support state overheads; he is somewhat concerned by this.
 - Eric Howe noted that this project could be held as a placeholder for the Steering Committee’s consideration in April, with the rest of the budget.
 - Matt Vaughan agreed that while this is an effort to prevent last-minute surprises in the April Steering Committee Meeting, the SC has the opportunity to review this project again.
 - Mario Paula noted his support for adding this project to LCBP’s core list.
 - ***ACTION: Motion to approve the inclusion of the full suite of core projects submitted, including WWTF optimization and NY Agronomist, by Koon Tang. Second by Vic Putman. Vote 8-5 in favor of the motion. Motion carried. Daniel Leblanc and Renee Rouleau abstained.***
- FY19 Technical RFPP Priorities
 - Matt Vaughan reviewed the TAC FY19 Budget development process and priorities to be identified in the Request for Pre-Proposals.
 - Koon Tang: are the TMDL funds only for projects that specifically address the Vermont 2016 TMDL?
 - Eric: Unclear at this point, as the congressional budgets are still being finalized.
 - Koon: Could New York propose TMDL projects?

- Matt: Certainly – they may not be eligible for any Vermont TMDL implementation funds, but would of course be eligible for other funding.
- **ACTION: Motion to adopt five noted priorities as written by Andrew Milliken. Second by Koon Tang. All in favor; motion is carried. No abstentions.**

2:30 Advisory Committee Membership Nominations

- **Executive Session to discuss Membership for the Technical Advisory Committee**

Exit Executive Session.

- **ACTION: Motion to appoint Neil Kamman as interim TAC chair through June 2019 by Andrew Milliken. Second by Pierre Leduc. All in favor; motion is carried. No abstentions.**
- **ACTION: Motion to appoint Leigh Walrath, Stephen Kramer, and Mindy Morales to the TAC by Emily Boedecker. Vicky Drew seconds. Motion is carried; no abstentions.**

2:45 LCBP Office Relocation Survey results – review and discussion

- Vicky Drew encouraged the relocation subcommittee to go out to bid for any potential relocation space, rather than single sourcing, to avoid the perception of federal dollars benefiting any individual unfairly.
- Andrew noted that the Resource Room functions as LCBP's public space, so a public component to any new office may not be necessary.

3:00 ADJOURN

Meeting Outcomes:

1. *Approval of April 9-10, 2018 Meeting Minutes*
2. *Approval of Technical and Heritage Priorities for the FFY2019 Requests for Pre-Proposals*
3. *Approval of Technical core projects*
4. *Appointments of new members to TAC*