

Lake Champlain Sea Grant (LCSG)  
Program Advisory Committee (PAC)

August 5, 2019

Aiken Center, Room 311

12:00 – 3:00 PM

Minutes

Attending:

PAC members: Dan Albrecht, Emily Bird, George Burrill, Lori Fisher, Steve Frederick, Eric Howe, Kara Lenorovitz, Dan Lerner, Crea Lintilhac, Jonathan Lilley (NSO Program Officer), Heather Furman, Chris Navitsky, Sonal Patel Dame, Leigh Walrath

Congressional Staff: Tom Berry, Thea Wurzburg, Jonathan Carman

LCSG Staff and Fellows: Breck Bowden, Kris Stepenuck, Mark Malchoff, Linda Patterson, Ashley Eaton, Marc Companion, Gary Deziel, Shari Halik, Suma Lashof (TNC fellow), Nate Trachte, Caroline Blake, Julianna White

Minutes taken by LCSG staff

I. Welcome and Introductions

- a. All in attendance introduced themselves.
- b. An extended introduction was offered by LCSG's newest staff member (who begins work on August 6), Julianna White, who was joining the meeting for a short time remotely while traveling back to Burlington. Julianna will serve as the Research Program Coordinator. She will also have the responsibility of managing fiscal aspects of not only LCSG but of the Water Center and Northeastern States Research Cooperative, both of which Breck Bowden also directs. Julianna's email is: [julianna.m.white@uvm.edu](mailto:julianna.m.white@uvm.edu)

II. Lake Champlain Sea Grant Institute and PAC Roles and Responsibilities

- a. Breck Bowden referenced the MOU that defines the leadership and overarching structure of LCSG, including PAC roles and responsibilities, and asked for any questions.
- b. The PAC last met during a March 2019 site review for LCSG. Breck reported that LCSG had received highest score in its Environmental Literacy and Workforce Development programming, and second highest score in the other two focus areas: Resilient Communities and Economies and Healthy Coastal Ecosystems. Jonathan Lilley reported that the final report had been sent to Breck and Kris just prior to the start of the meeting.
- c. In addition to serving to provide feedback that can help Sea Grant programs develop to be more effective and efficient, site reviews are a means for Sea Grant programs to become eligible for merit increases in base funding. Breck Bowden and Jonathan Lilley confirmed that LCSG will be eligible for a merit increase in 2022, at the start of the next four-year funding cycle of Sea Grant programs nationally.
- d. Conversation turned to a science communications tool of LCSG and partner organizations. This tool, called EcoNews VT, shares recent research findings in succinct and summarized form with a large group of stakeholders throughout the Lake Champlain Basin. **Action item:** Kris Stepenuck will ensure Shari Halik has email address for all PAC members and will add them to the distribution list. [Done.]

### III. Discussion on Outreach and Education Initiatives

Following informal introductions, new LCSG staff presented brief summaries of what they do.

- Nate Trachte described his efforts to establish Watershed Alliance programming on the New York shoreline and of the developing High School Stewardship Program with LCBP.
- Caroline Blake described a recent partnership program with the Community Sailing Center – a camp for 8-12 year old during which each afternoon was spent with LCSG staff on watershed education, and our three Summer Enrichment Scholars Program interns who assisted with camp and with a variety of other outreach projects.
- Suma Lashof (TNC-LCSG Fellow) described her efforts to develop science communication materials, notably for the designation of the Otter Creek wetlands as Class 1 wetlands in Vermont.

PAC members were encouraged to ask questions, share ideas, and converse about areas of focus of LCSG outreach and suggested areas of focus. Their feedback is described below (items a-d).

Current Programming: Stormwater management through lawn care; Clean boating and sustainable fisheries; Flood resiliency; Green stormwater infrastructure and natural assets management; Road salt; Professional Education (e.g., real estate professionals); Watershed Education (K-12 and teachers as well as public)

- a. **Fellowships:** LCSG has a new science communications research fellow in partnership with The Nature Conservancy. Heather Furman commented that the fellowship model with nonprofit partners is hugely important. It allows them to expand their capacity.
  - i. Heather offered to assist with taking this model to other organizations
- b. **Community Flood Resiliency:** Crea Lintilhac asked how LCSG interacts with towns and planning about setbacks and flood resiliency.
  - i. Kris Stepenuck shared recent LCSG work in this realm (partnering with the State Rivers Program, Regional Planning Commissions, Conservation Districts and nonprofits to host workshops and a webinar to help communities understand risks and opportunities to protect river corridors.
  - ii. Dan Albrecht shared that there are many organizations working on this and the importance of needing to have some level of coordination among those groups.
  - iii. The group identified an opportunity to address this at the UVM Extension Town Officers' Education Conference (TOEC), which is coordinated by Gary Deziel. LCSG could introduce more and expanded information about flood resilience to that audience.
  - iv. It was noted that there may also be an opportunity to address this with professional planners
  - v. It was also noted that there is a need for more workshops of this type in NY

- c. **Science Communications:** Tom Berry identified, and Eric Howe supported, the opportunity for LCSG – as a trusted source of unbiased scientific information – to communicate, in real time, information about water quality news (e.g., materials and personnel available).
  - i. Topics might include helping the public to understand health risks of:
    - 1. Cyanobacteria blooms
    - 2. Combined Sewer Overflows
  - ii. Lori Fisher noted that it will be important to identify information that can be pulled from other organizations that have and share accurate scientific information - to limit confusing messaging
  - iii. Such science communications might be developed to include:
    - 1. prepared statements about the facts/background information about certain issues and what the public needs to worry/not worry about
    - 2. “Press kit” of information
  - iv. Updates on Drinking Water issues - phosphorus testing
    - 1. Crea suggested to develop a podcast - based on science

d. **Watershed Organizations:**

- i. There is opportunity for LCSG to connect with current needs of watersheds orgs
- ii. For instance, for schools to engage in stewardship projects, LCSG could develop and maintain a listing of potential partners to connect schools to organizations and what they are looking for
- iii. LCSG could host a teacher meeting or webinar to pitch projects where help is needed

IV. Discussion about Research Program

- a. Chris Navitsky shared a summary of ongoing research of the FUND for Lake George that has installed of a woodchip bioreactor to reduce nitrate concentrations in effluent from the Bolton (NY) wastewater treatment plant through enhanced denitrification. LCSG has provided research funds to supported rigorous nutrient monitoring of the bioreactor.
- b. Breck shared a listing and short descriptions of all five current research projects (including the one Chris described)
- c. The discussion about the LCSG research program focused on engaging the PAC in serving on a review committee that helps to identify which projects best fit the needs of the Basin and its communities. **Action item:** Kris sent a Doodle poll for PAC members to complete if they are interested and do not have a conflict of interest with any of the 8-11 proposals expected to be submitted in a few weeks. [Done.]
- d. The group also provided guidance in terms of how LCSG might spend limited research funds. The suggestion was to focus on a couple projects and bring those to completion

V. Strategic Planning

- a. Kris shared a timeline for strategic planning over the next two years. This will include PAC involvement at three meetings (~January 2020, September 2020, and January 2021).
- b. In general, LCSG aims to have broad stakeholder engagement for strategic planning. 3-5 meetings will be held in locations across the basin.

- c. Staff with specific programs will also be asked to host focus groups of their stakeholders (e.g., K-12 education, green infrastructure)
- d. The January 2020 PAC meeting is expected to result in a draft plan for strategic planning sessions
  - i. **Action item:** Kris will send a Doodle poll with January dates to set meeting well in advance
- e. Emily Bird pointed out that there is great opportunity to dovetail strategic planning for VT DEC and LCSG, especially as related to new service providers to be identified in 2020 related to low impact development and stormwater runoff
- f. Tom Berry noted that another area that may bring funding for LCSG (and LCBP) work is that Lake Champlain was included in the Vessel Discharge Act (which will support efforts to understand and help to minimize spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS)
  - i. Upcoming legislation that will list LCSG, LCBP as key partners for AIS in LC
  - ii. Funding source is EPA
  - iii. EPA currently has limited knowledge about AIS in this region

## VI. Thinking About the Future Discussion

- a. Should we have focus on agriculture?
  - i. Concern about “overcrowding” per suggestion from previous PAC meetings
  - ii. LCSG previously made the decision not to focus on agriculture because others (e.g., UVM Extension, LCBP, etc.) were doing this
  - iii. What could we bring that is “special?” – need to have the right people if we want to do this.
- b. Tom Berry asked if we should split clean boating and sustainable fisheries into multiple categories?
  - i. Mark Malchoff suggested we think who is audience for sustainable fisheries (FTC, chamber of commerce, etc.)? Sometimes not a big audience for technical information.
- c. Crea Lintilhac suggested we need better connection between science and regulatory efforts
- d. Chris Navitsky noted that they have a council of business advisors in Lake George. Need to get science to business community, so they can push for policy changes.
  - i. Crea noted how important the wetlands study in Middlebury was for the business community; had a big payoff
- e. Contaminants of emerging concern; e.g., PFAS
- f. Breck Is there a role for LCSG to participate in the implementation of Act 76? Emily Bird from VTDEC shared that there are workshops coming at National Life in August. She explained:
  - i. Service providers will be responsible for operations and maintenance standards. This will be a major lift, especially when it comes to 3 acres of impervious services. There will be 700 permittees in the LC basin (VT side). Do we have enough contractors/work force to support?
  - ii. Emily threw in *many* ideas because change is coming. How can we connect partners?

- iii. Lots of players; there is a major need for networking
- iv. Breck asked who is the audience? Service providers or the community that will adopt? Emily explained that VTDEC is still figuring it out.
- v. How will partners “rewire” to figure this out? TBD
- vi. **Action item:** Emily will share upcoming webinar with LCSG staff to share with PAC members. [Done.]

DRAFT