

Lake Champlain Sea Grant Program Advisory Committee

Wednesday, December 3, 2025

Agenda and Notes

Location: Remote via Zoom.

Meeting Goals: The Lake Champlain Sea Grant Program Advisory Committee will strengthen its role in guiding the program by reviewing and advising on site review feedback, clarifying future membership guidelines, and building a shared understanding of the upcoming strategic planning process.

Objectives:

The LCSG PAC will:

- Understand LCSG ongoing activities
- Learn about and have opportunity to provide guidance to LCSG about site review feedback
- Discuss future PAC roles and membership guidelines
- Gain understanding of upcoming strategic planning process

Activities

- 10:00 AM Welcome and agenda overview
- 10:05 AM General program updates
- 10:15 AM Site review report overview and intro to breakout room activity
- 10:20 AM Breakout rooms to discuss site review suggestions
- 10:40 AM Sharing summarized discussions as a group
- 10:50 AM Future PAC roles and membership
- Roles
 - Membership structure
 - Transitioning plan among members
- 11:10 AM Overview of upcoming strategic planning process
- 11:20 AM Next steps and questions
- 11:30 AM Adjourn

Meeting Notes (by Kris Stepenuck):

PAC members present: Crea Lintilhac, Ted Lawson, Lyn Munno, Mark Malchoff, Annie Costandi, Dan Albrecht, Sonal Patel-Dame, Alyssa Senecal, Emily Bird, Anne Jefferson, Noelle Hasan, Tim Mihuc, Eric Howe, Jillian Zajac, Kris Stepenuck

LCSG staff present: Aude Lochet, Tori DesRocher, Caroline McKelvey, Jill Sarazen, Mark Mitchell, Shawn White, Ashley Eaton, Gretchen Nareff

- The June 2025 Site Review resulted in a number of suggestions from the site review team. One of those suggestions encouraged LCSG to identify and make nominations for awards to enable LCSG programs to be recognized for the good work being done. In response Kris Stepenuck asks PAC members to identify, in the chat, awards programs that LCSG might want to consider making nominations to in order to seek recognition for successful LCSG programs. Suggestions included:
 - Great Lakes Research Conference award (Tim)
 - North American Lakes Management Society (Eric): may have to be NALMS member. <https://www.nalms.org/nalms-achievement-awards/nomination-process/> (Sabrina Koetter won a student award this year.)
 - Great Lakes Fisheries Commission awards (often awarded to people from the 5 Great Lakes, but Ellen Marsden and Brad Young have been recognized): <https://www.glfc.org/about.php#awards>
 - New England Stormwater Collaborative Stormy Awards (Annie): <https://www.nestormwater.org/stormy-awards>
- Jill Sarazen and Michelle Lockhart, along with the full BLUE Program Team were recognized in May for the GMWEA Stormwater Program Award. Ashley Eaton was just notified of her recognition as the Northeast Extension Director's (NEED) Exceptional Local Educator Award for 2025. Early in 2026, she will be making a presentation about her efforts that earned her this recognition.
- LCSG has a current position opening to fill Anna Marchessault's program assistant, reporting and communications role. Kris asked PAC members to share with their networks as appropriate. Start date for the position is ASAP in 2026.
- LCSG next had PAC members self-select break out rooms in Zoom to converse about several of the suggestions received in the site review report. Notes from these discussions can be found in the Appendix.
- LCSG invited PAC members to share in the chat what roles they believe the PAC should play in advising and supporting LCSG's efforts. Members identified the following potential roles:
 - **Promote LCSG activities** within their primary networks (e.g., RPCs communicating with towns).

- **Help “market” LCSG** to basin stakeholders to increase visibility and engagement.
- **Serve as conveners** by bringing together researchers, practitioners, and funders to generate research ideas, share questions, and encourage cross-pollination across the research community.
- **Act as a conduit** between PAC member networks (e.g., watershed groups) and LCSG when helpful or relevant.
- **Provide two-way communication** between member organizations and LCSG, including sharing input, coordinating efforts, and identifying resource needs.
- **Help coordinate priorities** across sectors—business, academia, government, and nonprofits.
- **Continue the PAC’s historical role** in framing priorities for each new Sea Grant Omnibus cycle and annual research program priorities.
- **Assess sector representation** on the PAC (e.g., tourism, bass fishing community) and consider opportunities to expand membership or engagement. Suggestion to host a tournament.
- LCSG also shared with PAC members that there was a suggestion from the site review team for LCSG to create a charter about the roles of the PAC. Such information is currently contained within an MOU about LCSG. LCSG plans to extract PAC roles from the MOU to create the charter. This was followed by a short conversation.
- Topics that came up included:
 - Each of the organizations that serve on the PAC are unique...each is balancing its own interests...nothing in the MOU defines that.
 - Opportunities for partnerships are always beneficial
 - All PAC members have in mind the need to help LCSG address its funding needs and help elevate/share the work that LCSG has done
 - Be clear about what roles each person on the PAC plays, taking into consideration the stressors within each person’s professional roles.
 - Someone inquired what the difference was between the second and fourth [MOU bullets](#) in Section 8.1
 - The second is strategic planning – what should LCSG programming look like?
 - The fourth is about new happenings in the world...that might affect LCSG efforts (e.g., if there is a new aquatic invasive species (AIS) or new opportunity within an agency or emerging contaminant)
 - Observation in the chat: “Many of the comments dropped in chat work towards bullet 5. Help create connections, collaboration, partnerships and funding to further LCSG mission.”
 - Is there a requirement for size? No. The PAC in 2021 defined its own size.
 - How many PAC members now? 24 plus Ex Officio.
 - Are there organizations not represented that should be?

- Maybe representation from the Adirondack Park Agency?
- Conversation shifted to the research side of LCSG efforts
 - From the chat, “I also think there is space for capacity building in the research community. Training in how to write LOI, proposal, develop strong research questions. especially if we hope to do interdisciplinary work, break into new areas of research, tap new funding sources. LCSG could host capacity building workshops in specific or holistic research and collaboration skills. My basic point is, if we want create new and exciting research, methods and processes we need to provide space for people to experiment and help them develop the skills for this work.”
 - Researchers from all fields come together at SUNY to help people develop new research questions that probably wouldn’t think of just working with typical collaborators....
 - Also, innovating your own research methods, and talk about it and experiment and make mistakes...create space for capacity building in new research skills...if not getting LOIs we like, let’s host workshop on how to write these and teach people how to collaborate...how to talk across disciplinary boundaries and talk across silos. Extend beyond just research community...funders, NGOs,
 - LCBP would happily partner on a proposal writing training. Suggested for January by Eric.
 - Curt happy to work with people on this. *Note:* In follow up to this meeting, we were unable to fit this into the January conference schedule. **However, LCSG, Curt, and LCBP are planning such a convening for fall 2026 to prepare collaborative teams for future funding opportunities**
- Sonal in the chat: Could researchers in the basin help mentor high school students for STEM or Science Fairs to help ignite curiosity and show students that they can play a role in the research going on in our basin?
 - Curt in the chat: From a higher ed perspective, this is a great recruitment tool also... I would think SUNY Plattsburgh administrators would love to see this and perhaps have some \$ to put behind it.
- Have we surveyed people who submitted proposals and were rejected? What did they learn, like, not like, what are they thinking they’re supposed to be doing?
- Finally, LCSG shared with the PAC plans for its next Strategic planning process. This will kick off in winter 2026 and run through early summer 2026, with a draft strategic plan shared with PAC members in summer 2026.
 - Dan asked are there any big events planned to talk about state of the lake in 2026? TMDL Is less big news right now. Is there something happening to bring the lake back up in people’s minds?

- Emily – working on reset and raiding the profile and underscoring all the work we're doing impacts (+ly_) water quality and flood resilience. VTDEC has been talking about doing this type of thing. Dan thinks this would be great.
 - Let's celebrate some successes
 - State of the Lake...LCBP last published SOL in 2024. On schedule to publish next one in 2027. Next year (see chat) they printed 150K copies of document Eric put in the chat. 4 page newspaper SOL summary. Can think about ways to promote the lake again.
 - In person and virtual for February meeting
 - As the meeting wound down, everyone shared top two things propelling their current work
 - Plastic pollution, grant writing
 - Trying to maintain federal funding for environmental programs.
 - Funding and Funding.
 - Storm events on Lake Champlain and planktonic communities
 - helping our towns navigate stormwater permits and other related issues
 - Water quality and flood resilience projects
 - Barriers to making progress that people shared included:
 - The barrier is always bureaucracy and paperwork.
 - Flooding and sedimentation for stream resilience and community resilience
Habitat recovery
 - Funding
 - Improved coordination across programs to streamline project work.
 - Also maintaining funding and how to strategically leverage/address gaps
 - Barriers: procurement regs, archeological review,
 - Supporting capacity growth; balancing priorities both for WUV but more for all the groups we work with.
 - advancing funded projects so they are ready to go for the upcoming field season
1. Figuring out how to engage students in current research in the basin. (Maybe Data Nuggets from researchers would help??)
 2. Finding the time to show fellow teachers how they could teach their content using the basin as their driving phenomenon.
 - transboundary context- states/province, two nations, tribal land and relationships.
 - 2. getting buy-in, response, communication and participation from municipal governments and large landowners
 - Early career development (proposal writing workshops, etc) and job opportunities

- Lake reclassification in VT legislative rulemaking; sustained funding for inland lake restoration projects (watershed, septic systems, in-lake)

Appendix: Break-out Meeting Notes

Building relationships with researchers suggestions notes

LCSG PAC Meeting December 3, 2025

LCSG Staff: Aude, Mark

Suggestions to frame the discussion:

- Suggestion (#10). In order for LCSG to continue to be relevant and responsive to constituents, the SRT suggests that the program continue to **strengthen relationships with research faculty who work in environmental, watershed, sustainability, and civic education** and tap into their expertise, students, and research interests. This could grow to additional successful proposals for research in education and outreach that would directly benefit your programs, by exploring things like the ideal frequency of watershed education programs; the characteristics of teachers, school leadership, or communities that lead to adopting watershed education programs and stewardship projects; or strategies to overcome barriers to adoption of key behaviors among a critical workforce.
- Suggestion (#14). The SRT suggests the program continues to **build on efforts to reach out to researchers from a broad range of disciplines and institutions**. In the context of program focus areas and priority activities, there are particular opportunities to connect with UVM College of Education and Social Services and College of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences, along with schools at SUNY-P. **Consider expanding to other colleges and universities in the region**, such as Antioch/New England and Paul Smith's where faculty have expertise in environmental education and evaluation strategies. **Direct outreach to build relationships with new researchers to connect them to the LCSG could be helpful** in generating additional research proposals. Faculty members may also create opportunities to leverage project-based and other courses to further engage students in LCSG research efforts.

PAC members present:

Curt Gervich

Kelly Tucker, Ausable Freshwater Center

Mark Malchoff

Ideas/input from PAC members:

1. Curt: SUNY research generator/innovation workshops world cafe style for collaboration (e.g. McGill University); dedicated forum to gather researchers, potential researchers,

project partners. Facilitated discussions. "how develop interdisciplinary research projects" (plan for January LC Research Conference)

2. Kelly: have LCSG sit in on existing conferences run by NY Centers of Excellence (16 at universities) - generate science ideas for solutions that are marketable (May)
3. Kelly: Non-profits with independent researchers (especially in NY) - need to better engage non-profits for expertise (rubber hits the road perspective)
4. Tim: LCSG might not need to create new ways to exchange ideas among researchers as there are existing ways (e.g., Coffee breaks organized by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission or the LC Research Conference). LCSG should not reinvent the wheel.

Note: It seems that VT is more involved, engaged, in the sharing of ideas/mingling than the NY side of the Lake.

Education Suggestions Notes

LCSG PAC Meeting December 3, 2025

LCSG Staff Members: Ashley, Caroline

Site Review Suggestions Re: Education

#12 The following suggestions could assist LCSG move toward developing a comprehensive and complete educational program that reaches all students in the Lake Champlain basin. The SRT encourages, as resources allow, the following:

- A. To continue to partner with other organizations and agencies to supplement each other's efforts to provide a comprehensive watershed education program that will achieve everyone's goals. We suggest striving toward collectively providing a comprehensive program for K-12 students and educators, including all the state agencies, school systems, nature centers, parks, community centers, recreation programs in the entire watershed. Consider surveying them, or funding the CBEI to organize a roundtable or process to identify all of the players, conduct a gap analysis, and collectively decide how to best serve the region, so that all youth are served in a manner that respects each organization's mission and resources.
- B. Consider either scaffolding programs to encourage multiple visits, or nesting your programs with others, to build a water/ecosystem/stewardship program that together reaches each student every year.

Ideas/input from PAC members:

Round 1: Ted lawson, sonal patel-dame, Lyn Munno

Ted Lawson

- ECHO is a vehicle for bringing K-12 students to the waterfront and their outreach programming (STEM truck) - going around the northern half of VT (about 25 times a

year elementary through middle school). Potential partnerships. 6-8 activities that are very hands-on. Interested in weaving more lake and stewardship into those activities

- Some of the current funding they have and are going after involves more lake stewardship as an area of focus - ECHO is thinking internally about how to build some of that into our STEM work (Stewardship and lake lens)
- Right now, STEM focus is engineering
- Leveraging some of the work ECHO is already doing to have a lake focus that Sea Grant could help
- Fully grant funded - that's the model they would like to stick to. Shifted the plan, and do have a paid model.

Lyn Munno

- Tapping into what Watershed Education is already happening more locally
- Many watershed education programs are doing in stream work and good awareness of what schools have watershed groups going in and what they are doing
- One way of extending Sea Grants reach if there is an opportunity to provide some funding to other groups doing that work and could do more education

Sonal Patel-Dame

- So many K-6 and K-8 Programs, hard to find funded or free programs that can come to High School students.
- In NY State Portrait of a Graduate, districts will be creating place-based units (great place for Sea Grant to jump in and create some storylines). Targeted to high school

Lyn Munno

- How much scaffolding is happening? Clearing house of what's happening
- Right now nobody knows where the gaps are and where those touchpoints are happening

Ted Lawson

- Lincoln school - play about a river (3rd)
- 5th and 6th grade - trout in the classroom
- Think about the threads that are there and continue to grow that learning thread
- Where the low hanging fruit to build off things that are already happening

CBEI - Ted Lawson email about looping in CBEI

- 18-20 elementary teacher PD with multiple touchpoints - low hanging fruit, get them out on the R/V

Sonal - Could researchers in the basin help mentor high school students for STEM or Science Fairs to help ignite curiosity and show students that they can play a role in the research going on in our basin?

1. Figuring out how to engage students in current research in the basin. (Maybe Data Nuggets from researchers would help??)
2. Finding the time to show fellow teachers how they could teach their content using the basin as their driving phenomenon.

Funding Suggestions Notes

LCSG PAC Meeting December 3, 2025

LCSG Staff: Anne, Tori

Suggestions to frame discussion:

- Suggestion (#8). The SRT suggests that LCSG explore working with SUNY-P and UVM development professionals, policy makers and other Sea Grant network programs to explore new and diversified sources of funding. This could include, but should not be limited to, national, regional and community-based foundations, scholarships, bequests and other sources of charitable giving. A potential opportunity are the community foundations in Vermont, New York and the greater New England Region that could help establish endowments supporting LCSG.
- Suggestion (#20). The SRT encourages LCSG to find ways to grow the state-level fellowship that works with policy at the municipality and state levels (e.g. similar to other Sea Grant program state-level fellowship opportunities).

Ideas/input from PAC members:

PAC Members- Eric Howe, Kelley Tucker

20- Municipality Fellowship

- Arts Council reaches out to the chairs of the state legislative committees that apply to their work and build connections and provide flyers to inform legislation of current projects what is happening within their districts
- Anne- you can request a table at legislative meetings, but missed deadline previously, Marcelle Melosira trips
- Build in a research component with state legislators, how to inform them about community projects
- Julie and Neil (Secretary of ANR and Deputy Commissioner of VTDEC) share perspectives on practicality of what legislators propose
- Knauss fellowship for VT, statewide - NY would be a harder feat but perhaps an ADK park focus, Catskills for NY Sea Grant
- Does NY Sea Grant have a fellowship that we can piggyback on?

- Do we reach out to Michael Cashman, representative of NY
- Working with the town is much easier than county or district-level is easier - resilience issues
 - Anna Reynolds, Essex County Planning Department- reach out for ideas

Municipal Partners Suggestions Notes

LCSG PAC Meeting December 3, 2025

LCSG Staff: Alison, Michelle

Suggestions to frame discussion:

- Suggestion (#13): The SRT encourages LCSG to **continue to seek opportunities to further engage a broad set of cities, towns, and villages in VT and NY**, including through associations (e.g. Vermont Planners Association, Vermont League of Cities and Towns, New York Upstate Chapter of the American Planning Association) and regional planning organizations, especially in the context of urban and suburban focus. There are **opportunities for local policy impacts** (e.g. creating model ordinances/bylaws) that could be supported by this action.
- Suggestion (#18): Municipalities represent an important scale for policy impact. The SRT suggests LCSG **explore opportunities to support local scale policy impacts** through dissemination of best practices and examples of local level ordinance/bylaw changes to institutionalize local green infrastructure, stormwater management, riparian protection, and other practices that help communities respond to changing environmental conditions.

Ideas/input from PAC members:

Rebecca Ellis (State Director for Senator Welch), Dan Albrecht (Natural Resources Program Manager, CCRPC), Annie Costandi (Water Quality Director, Town of Essex Junction)

Dan: Suggestion 18- regarding service and connections w/ municipalities is covered by CCRPC so maybe LCSG could fulfill a different niche. RPCs already work closely with towns on bylaws and flood regs. Towns and municipalities already have language on river corridors. Would appreciate increased coordination with LCSG. For example, if LCSG is connecting with a planning commission to talk about resiliency, please run this by CCRPC to see if we would also like to be involved.

Rebecca: LCSG doing a great job facilitating communication, but there is a gap in information relating to water (rivers, shoreland protection) in VT- LCSG fills this niche and can continue doing this work. Perhaps have increased communication media like newsletters- this can influence bylaws. Make sure distribution lists include members of VT select boards (needs to be updated yearly)

Annie: have you thought about presenting to select boards? Could be a way to showcase specific projects and build relationships with municipalities

Dan: CCRCP has a database of selectboard members, DRB members, Planning Commissions, etc. for each town

PAC Suggestions Notes

LCSG PAC Meeting December 3, 2025

LCSG Staff: Kris, Shawn

Suggestions to frame discussion:

- Suggestion (#3): Consider exploring the needs of Quebec people and agencies to protect the ecosystem and support communities by adding someone to the PAC, **thinking of niches and needs, and approaching Canadian organizations and agencies** for funding to support effective LCSG outreach and training that would be relevant and needed across the border.
- Suggestion (#15): The Site Review Team suggests that LCSG **further leverage political representatives on PAC**, providing periodic updates on impacts, exploring opportunities to translate research to policy, and exploring opportunities for additional funding to support focus areas.

Ideas/input from PAC members:

- Quebec needs more attention 8.5M constituents (all of Quebec)
- Eric Howe, Lake Champlain Committee, Lori Fisher would be good contacts to develop better relationships with political representatives.
- Would be good to develop other relationships beyond PAC members
- Julie Moore would also be a good contact
- Build on LC Aquatic Non-indigenous Species - database (Noelle Hasan has contributed to this) Need better Quebec connection in this effort
- Hyrdo Quebec is imp to VT; need more conversation about its impact

Are any congressional members on PAC? Yes: Rebecca Ellis, reps from Sanders, Welch, Balian's offices. We have more influence on state policy rather than federal. We should have more contributions and relationships with state officials. Federal is important to make sure fed offices are aware of and can advocate for funding for LCSG.

How do we, as a collective of partners receiving federal funding, advocate for funding in a concerted way (rather than as competitors)

Tom Berry has been a really useful connection in the past.

Research suggestions notes

LCSG PAC Meeting December 3, 2025

LCSG Staff: Gretchen, Jill

PAC attendees: Tim Mihuc, Curt Gervich

Suggestion to frame discussion:

- The **shift from a pre-proposal to LOI contributes to a supportive environment for prospective researchers**. As LCSG aims to expand both the institutions and disciplines represented in research, the team is encouraged to **further formalize responses to LOIs**, offering constructive input to improve proposals. LCSG is encouraged as well to further assess barriers faced by prospective researchers in moving from interest to LOI to proposal.
- 19 LOIs for 2024–2026
- 16 LOIs for 2026–2028
- I (Gretchen) created a survey to ask researchers who submitted an LOI but didn't submit a proposal why and what the barriers were (we think match may be some of it)

Ideas/input from PAC members:

- Not exactly sure what kind of feedback the site review team thinks we should give back? Quality? Don't provide detailed feedback currently. Share LOIs with leadership? For feedback
 - Purpose of LOIs: sense of spread of topics, funding planning, if it fits in with LCSG strategic plan or not
 - 11 proposals from 19 submitted LOIs
 - Match might be a big part of it? For why people don't submit full proposals
- Brief response in a response letter to LOI
- Share LOI topics with leadership - for brief feedback
- Ask for potential grant reviews reviewers in the LOI
- Formalize the LOI structure
 - Gretchen says will start using info ready
- Curt: has LCSG ever hosted writing workshops for perspective proposal writers?
 - A few months before LOIs are due. Generate ideas, build capacity in building LOIs/proposals that you want to see.
 - Especially for early career folks or outside academia