

**Lake Champlain Sea Grant (LCSG) Program Advisory Committee (PAC) Meeting
Minutes – Draft January 30, 2020**

January 15, 2020

Locations: Plattsburgh, NY, Burlington, VT, and via Zoom webinar

PAC members present: Dan Albrecht, Jill Arace, Emily Bird, Brooke Carney, Lori Fisher, Phelan Fretz, Eric Howe, John Kowal, Dan Lerner, Kara Lenorovitz, Crea Lintilhac, Chris Navitsky, Sonal Patel-Dame, Leigh Walrath

Congressional Staff present: Jonathan Carman for Rep Stefanik

LCSG staff present: Breck Bowden, Tim Mihuc, Mark Malchoff, Kris Stepenuck, Ashley Eaton, Linda Patterson, Gary Deziel, Suma Lashoff, Nate Trachte, Shari Halik, Caroline Blake, and Julianna White

Opening Session

- Breck Bowden opened the meeting by sharing objectives, which included ensuring PAC members understood the process/timeline for strategic plan (SP) review and updates, including to engage in assessment of focus area actions, goals outcomes and activities identified in the SP
 - Strategic plan revisions (if any) due to National Sea Grant Office in August 2020
- Breck & Brooke Carney (National Sea Grant Program Officer for LCSG) introduced the process and timeline. This strategic plan will operate on a 2-year cycle, for 2022-23. They shared reasoning and benefits of this shift in timing and shortened length of the next omnibus cycle. For this SP review, each Sea Grant program has flexibility to make changes or keep their current strategic plan.
- Kris Stepenuck provided a brief overview of the 2018-2022 Strategic Plan
 - Asked the PAC to consider (today) identified audiences and assess if LCSG is missing any key audiences
 - **Action item:** Asked PAC to review core values and cross-cutting principles and to be in touch with LCSG with any recommendations for revisions; will not review these during today's meeting

Opening Changes & Opportunities within the LC basin

- The group was asked to come prepared to share their thoughts on new opportunities that may exist within the LC basin that may influence the work of LCSG in the coming years. A summary of responses follows.
 - Opportunities to engage (across PAC partners as well as within LCSG) with Act 76, Clean Water Fund, clean water service providers, P reduction targets, and prioritization

- Stormwater runoff from school impervious surfaces
- Wetlands and riparian restoration (esp. Poultney Mettowee basin)
- new farm bill;
- Payment for ecosystem services working group has a focus on enhancing natural capital which provides these services (soil health, H2O quality, C sequestration);
- Potential to integrate with Agricultural Water Quality Partnership to address high priority needs for research
- Proactive work needed re: new generation contaminants – opportunity to use national Sea Grant community to inform LCSG efforts. What challenges are other lakes facing?
- Better coordination on projects b/w LCSG and LC Basin Program
- Consider the climate crisis and workforce development opportunities; look for linkages between need for education and clean water service providers
- Create linkages (esp for goals 3&4) with the business community; they are interested in investing in communities; Points of contact include: GBIC and chambers; also Vermont business roundtable
- Broader effort within NY portion of the basin
 - Expand Lake Wise program (may be coming in part through LCBP)
 - Toolbox for local municipalities
- Consider assessment of NY's Mother Nature bond act (resiliency, climate-smart communities, \$3 billion act); designed to help fund solutions-oriented research
 - Drive research initiatives by identifying solutions (e.g., Woodchip buying program)
- Need for outreach to inform communities of current practices
- Improve outreach in the LCSG RFP processes & beyond

World Café Conversations

- The group was divided into four, each with a focus area or component of a focus area on which LCSG focuses, to address.
- The goal of conversations was threefold: to discuss 1) what's working that we should keep, 2) what is not working that we should drop, and 3) what new opportunities should we address? Each group considered these questions in the context of LCSG's three focus areas: environmental literacy, workforce development, healthy coastal ecosystems, and resilient communities and economies
- Each group was asked to identify if there were specific research needs or priorities associated with the ideas about which they spoke

Environmental Literacy Actions and Outcomes (Facilitated by Mark and Nate)

- Develop Green Infrastructure Tours for NY?
 - Potential to integrate these with sites that are visited for other purposes (e.g., Gardens, heritage sites, sites at the US Oval etc.)
 - Lesson or “quiz” questions that link to a virtual tour for use by teachers
- Work on dam removal? Matt Vaughn has put together NY Dam Task Force for the past year: aquatic organism passage, improving dams
- Watershed Alliance in NY and VT has been effective thus far, as well as Watershed for Every Classroom and the CBEI.
- It has been harder to get teachers involved in professional development opportunities in NY. Leverage NYS continuing teacher education (CTLE 100 hours) by accrediting a program like WEC at the graduate level and/or single day events.
- Detail ongoing research in writing i.e. blog post or otherwise that teachers can take into class and present as “cool stuff happening in the watershed”
- Construct new programs and align Watershed Alliance to address New York State Science Learning Standards (NYSSLS).
 - Teachers and admin need explicit advertising of this to justify involvement.

Environmental Literacy Actions and Outcomes (Facilitated by Caroline, Gary and Ashley)

Where can we improve?

- Evaluate the effectiveness or impact of the offerings

Opportunities:

- Connect with ECHO in their effort to develop 6 state park nature centers
- Initiatives where the school site can be the research site because transportation is limited
 - Raise the blade (sites)
 - Salt / Stormwater runoff/ rainfall/ compost - baseline data points that students could be collecting
- Skype a scientist – arranged by LCSG

Workforce Development Actions and Outcomes (Facilitated by Caroline, Gary, and Ashley)

Opportunities:

- Business-supported internships (½ supported by business and ½ with LCSG)
 - What is the LCSG role and how does that make sense for a business (where do they have space for students)
 - Internship program in RSENR
 - Intern facilitating specific LCSG role (e.g. green infrastructure, shoreline)
 - Insurance companies (need to be big) and risk exposures (community resilience)

- Conduct needs assessments at local businesses (that do work in the realm of LCSG work) to understand their needs around workforce development
 - Pitch this as a NR206 service-learning project
- Create 3-5 min videos of active research happening in the Lake Champlain Basin to use as workforce development tools for staff at businesses
 - Also can show on WCAX - Across the Fence
 - Infinitely scalable – that is, can easily be used in multiple ways/places once created (e.g., could use to train Coastal Tourism staff, with NY or VT State Parks, on LCSG website)
 - Future Science Communication Interns could assist with video production
- Offer applied out of the school experiences focused on technical expertise to allow people to gain proficiency in a variety of arenas
 - Possibly partner with environmental consulting firms or clean water service providers

Resilient Communities and Economies Actions and Outcomes (Facilitated by Linda and Julianna)

- What is not working?
 - Need for sharing of cyanobacteria information- is the government doing enough?
- New opportunities?
 - Outreach
 - Improve messaging, including economic analysis, of the importance of water quality to communities and economies
 - Community member summer migrants; disconnect within second home community), we need to educate these people into the culture of conservation
 - Add a private sector businessperson to PAC and consider possibility of expanding business networks in target communities in the basin to serve as advocates. Refer to experience from Fund for Lake George Council of Business Advisors. Build on Vermont business roundtables, marina list-serve, etc.
 - Train media contacts
 - By the time these people understand our work, they move on to a new position; we need to improve this process
 - 3-day summer course in watershed science for our media contacts; Eric is interested in coordinating on this effort
 - Focus on science-based terms, “harmful algal blooms” vs. “cyanobacteria”
 - Provides leads for news stories
 - Emma Cotton - great story on the Otter Creek Basin (series of 3 articles) and a follow up article as a journalist in the Addison county paper

<https://addisonindependent.com/opeds/clippings-emma-cotton-truths-are-found-through-listening>

- Consider research on how to evaluate the economic value and the value of the public goods of ecosystem services in the basin. (Ex. Build on previous research on value of reduced flooding – FEMA data). Include different land uses / landscape functions, and the value they provide.

Healthy Coastal Ecosystems Actions and Outcomes (Facilitated by Marc and Shari)

- What's working? Target areas, LCSG Projects, etc.
 - Cyanobacteria blooms
 - Road salt best-practices
 - Education through Green Schools Initiatives; we're working w/ interested schools to get permit coverage, we're working with schools to set mechanisms before advancing the program
 - Capacity building, on-the-ground grassroots efforts
 - We have NY-based staff! Having presence here improves our on-the-ground partnerships, ability to achieve goals, and pilot projects
 - We're strategic with our resources
- Where can we improve? Opportunities to make these improvements?
 - Lack of involvement in Restoration of floodplains and wetlands
 - Surface water classification efforts
 - NY side- need to strengthen capacity and presence, can look to Vermont for examples than transfer to the NY side of basin
 - Whatever is happening on the VT side should be complemented by similar efforts in NY; challenge w/ bureaucracy
 - Need accountability
 - Interest to strengthen road salt work, especially on NY side
 - Look for alternatives to road salt to reach reduction goals: pickle brine, beets, etc.
 - Can we look to our neighbors in Canada? They require snow tires by law, and use less road salt. Need more research in that area
 - How to be entrepreneurial/create economy boosts and jobs
 - Need: civil engineers, watershed science curriculum, there is a need to fill these positions
 - Need to identify outcomes for our projects, if they don't have a clear outcome we shouldn't focus our efforts here
 - Think of large-scale and long-term benefits
 - Tap into work of others such as GUND, engineers
 - Translation of Scientific Research to general public audience
 - Tap into media outlets & networks: Seven Days, VTDigger

- Know your targeted audiences
 - Target specific stakeholders vs. everyone
 - Land conservation: protecting something to prevent future damage, active and passive (ex. Protecting floodplains) restoration, need to direct funding to broader conservation efforts
 - Add anti-degradation to Initiative 5.2
 - Need more coordination w/ conservation organizations & state government to identify conservation projects and initiatives
 - How to prioritize clean water funds
 - Input to conservation easement language
 - Education about why conservation project is important
 - Moving away from AIS is a loss- we should stay aware & informed
- 2 Primary Mechanisms to achieve objectives
 - Mitigation: Green Schools Initiative
 - Restoration: riparian buffer, Mettowee, reclassification of surface waters, wetland classification (LCSG should partner w/ those doing the work on Class 1 & 2, also provide info to help inform education and outreach)

Discussion: Strategies for Moving Forward

- Next steps include the LCSG staff assessing the various input received today, and determining what if any changes need to be made to the strategic plan
- Julianna, Ashley and Marc (and possibly others) will engage in strategic planning with their interest areas of research, Watershed Alliance, and Green Infrastructure Collaborative in the coming months to inform those programs' goals and desired actions and outcomes for 2022-2023.
- LCSG will confirm that existing SP remains relevant or will send revised SP (minor revisions only) to the National Sea Grant Office in August 2020.
- The next PAC meeting will be held in New York (Plattsburgh?), followed by one in VT. We intend to alternate between the two states in similar fashion to LCBP meetings.