

Lake Champlain Sea Grant Program Advisory Committee Meeting

August 26, 2020

Note takers: Caroline Blake & Nate Trachte

PAC members in attendance: Dan Albrecht, Emily Bird, George Burrill, Lori Fisher, Phelan Fretz, Eric Howe, Dan Lerner, Crea Lintilhac, Chris Navitsky, Sonal Patel-Dame, Holden Sparacino, Leigh R Walrath,

Ex Officio members in attendance: Tom Berry (Sen Leahy), Jonathan Carman (Rep Stefanik), Rebecca Certner (National Sea Grant Program Officer), Haley Pero (Sen Sanders)

LCSG staff in attendance: Alison Adams, Caroline Blake, Breck Bowden, Marc Companion, Gary Deziel, Ashley Eaton, Shari Halik, Linda Patterson, Mark Malchoff, Tim Mihuc, Kris Stepenuck, Nate Trachte, Julianna White

- Developments since last meeting
 - New steering committee members (75% new) including Michael Simpson (Director SUNY Plattsburgh Sponsored Programs), Kirk Dombrowski (UVM VP for Research), and Leslie Parise (Dean of UVM College of Agriculture and Life Sciences). Nancy Matthews (Dean of UVM Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources) is only returning member
 - Our LCSG team is growing – Alison Adams staff member (Watershed Forestry Partnership), Fellows/temps (VYCC (Justin Geibel), Knauss fellow (Hannah Lachance), Project Blue (Juliana Dixon)
 - Quick recognition for Mark Malchoff for 21 years of service (he retires later this year, before PAC meets again)
 - Response to COVID-19 in spring: Zoom a Scientist sessions: 25 sessions, ~1,000+ participants, highlighted partner organization research and happenings
 - Suggestions for ZAS
 - Lori asked if there was a way to promote for adult community as well & lifelong learning. Is there a way to make it more long-term?
- Site review (2019)
 - Final report - “exceeds expectations by an exceptional margin in most areas/aspects”
 - New base funding \$1,279,000 (expected starting Feb. 2022) up from \$400,000 in 2018
 - New Omnibus proposal due Oct. 2021
- Use of new funds
 - With new funds (base funding increase - \$100,000/yr continuing)
 - LEAP program expansion
 - Establishing an indigenous education specialist position in partnership with Shelburne Farms -- Seeking funding partners for this if any PAC partners may be interested
 - Marina COVID response outreach
 - Establish Sea Grant Scholars Program and STEM internships (looking for organizations to sponsor internships and/or support scholarships)
 - Expanding watershed education opportunities
 - COVID-19 Rapid response (\$100,000 for 1 year)

- Support coastal tourism
 - Engage disadvantaged youth in place-based watershed education; scholarships for children of essential workers and low-middle income youth
 - Establish Aquaculture Education position (posted now; open until Sept. 3 or until filled)
 - Watershed Explorer Challenge – creating stand-alone booklet to overcome technology barriers to remote learning. Available second week of September via libraries and schools
 - Fall 2020 formal education programs
 - Mini zoom a scientist – 6 sessions planned
 - Core programs switched to virtual: SMSP, LCL, 4H20
 - Stormwater Education Methods course (open to teachers, homeschooling parents, and public invited for guest speakers)
- Site Review process looking forward
 - Cited 8 Best management practices (aspects of LCSG that other SG programs might emulate)
 - 2019 site review resulted in 3 recommendations (LCSG required to respond)
 - Develop a systematic approach to PAC representation; make publicly visible (today’s discussion)
 - Continue creating opportunities for underrepresented/underserved communities (ongoing)
 - Collect measures of student/teacher knowledge, attitudes, values and behaviors and ultimately publishing these findings (being developed)
 - PAC roles (there are 7 – see MOU on LCSG website)
 - Proposed PAC guidance to balance NY and VT representation and enhance diversity – 18 members and 6 Ex Officio, max two consecutive terms per person, expertise and experience to inform focus areas and cross-cutting principles
 - Dan A. – Concerned about lack of municipality representation particularly in VT. Echoed by Crea
 - Phelan – Consider rural vs Urban/suburban representation
 - Leigh – APA does not cover entire basin and not doing work with fisheries, WW treatment... might be more appropriate to have NYS DEC rep.
 - Emily – to the end of DEI, include social justice and/or environmental justice NGO rep...also mentioned representation of “farmer watershed alliance”
 - Crea – 3-acre permit release September 4th
 - Chris – due to agricultural impacts could benefit from a farmer or someone who represents farmers (Crea suggests Jackie Folsom Farm bureau)
 - Dan L. – adding farm owner/landowner viewpoint is a good suggestion
 - George – is there rationale for 18 members, can we bump up the number of reps, perhaps up to 24? 2 env nonprofit reps is not enough could be 4

- Eric seconded this - “move NGs and CDs up to 4 reps, with a goal of 2 per state”
 - Lori – agree with George for full PAC as well as nonprofit representation
 - Chris – agreed with increasing PAC numbers to include important voices
 - Tom – ensuring a rep for each House and Senate seat. Confirmed that is the intention for Ex Officio members.
- Updates to Strategic Plan for ‘22 ‘23
 - Main change is enhanced diversity equity and inclusion efforts as it pertains to our hiring, outreach, partnerships, institutional practices
 - Our actions: DEI statement to focus our efforts; developing an action plan
 - Nate – plan to reach out in New York & develop relationships there (hopefully involved in PAC in future). Plus, look into education opportunities with indigenous people
 - Diversifying PAC
 - Working to hire an indigenous educator in partnership with Shelburne Farms
 - Considering dual naming
 - Tom – Pleased we have tribal connections in both states, including both federally and state recognized tribes
 - PowerPlay interactive development – Improv-based implicit bias/DEI PD opportunity; interested to know if others would like to partner with LCSG on this?
 - Kris shared poll where people could express interest. (Note: Several PAC members were interested in addition to those who verbally noted their interest.)
 - Eric – LCBP interested in partnering
 - Lori – LCC interested as well
 - Crea – do we have connections with New American communities in Winooski?
 - Tom – the Association of Africans Living in Vermont recently received a USDA grant focused on ag/nutrition. As a result, there may be opportunities to partner.
 - Phelan – excited about these steps encourages us to use these trainings to evaluate our hiring structures, partnership structures, and our internal operations.
- Research strategizing for LCSG funded research 2022-23
 - Looking for 4-5 research projects
 - January 2020 PAC meeting summary of changes and opportunities
 - Support for Clean Water Act 76
 - Stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces
 - Restoration of riparian zones, flood plains and wetlands
 - Ag-water quality partnerships
 - New-generation contaminants
 - AIS
 - August 2019 PAC discussion on research
 - Focus on few projects and bring those to completion
 - Outreach and extension related to research: low-impact development, legislation regarding AIS, flooding,

- Increasing diversity through changes in RFP
 - Inclusive language, dissemination in more diverse arenas, heavier weighting for DEI review criteria from 10% to 20%, potentially research topics.
- 2022-2023: What research projects should LCSG invest in to have the most positive impacts for basin environment and economies?
 - Emily Bird – How do we better define or identify the disadvantaged communities we are hoping to serve and set targets for this work? VT Clean Water Program is working to develop criteria for project consideration.
 - Julianna – previous RFP = qualitative
 - Kris – is there an option for social science research? Answer = Yes, though LCSG and all Great Lakes Sea Grants have not funded much social science.
 - Discussion: Think about barriers to participation. Perhaps we need social science research to identify criteria for social/environmental inclusiveness?
- PAC recommendations on research topical areas
 - Are these 8 topical areas appropriate?
 - Ag & developed land runoff
 - Green infrastructure & clean water
 - Lake food webs
 - Shoreline habitat protection
 - Local foods, food security, Aquaculture
 - DEI
 - Emergency preparedness and climate change adaptation
 - Tribal knowledge
 - Individual suggestions
 - Eric H – AIS could fit under lake food webs, contaminants/microplastics could fit under food security
 - Crea L – New 3-acre rule & related issues link with shoreline and climate change. There is climate change mitigation in GSI & ag/developed land runoff. How can we encourage an integrated approach to a few of these topical areas?
 - Chris N - Likes grouping of bubbles. Can more weight be given to RFP with combined ideas? Separate idea: what about algal communities; do they fit under shoreline?
 - Crea L – Soil chemistry / contamination for example to measure cyanobacteria in drinking water. Does this fit under shoreline?
 - Tom B – Aquaculture and food security are national SG strength. Note that food systems research center at CALS has robust funding for this so coordinate with their efforts.
 - Tom B – Missing – potentially prioritizing emerging threats/contaminants like plastics
 - Tom B – How do we look more at recreation as it pertains to access? Not much examining need and best ways to address need for access to recreation with a focus on the whole lake.
 - Lori F – echoes, adds disparity of access among basin residents, great overlap with DEI, and specific issues with South Lake.

- Tom B – Most of the funding stream for VT Fish and Wildlife goes to boat access, and they have developed great disabled access at some of their launches. However, this does not address people without resources.
- Open vs Prescriptive RFP approach
 - Dan A – Likes prescriptive, especially for next few years, in the phosphorus world. If we don't solve Phosphorous issue then other concerns are mute. Suggests 80% funding for prescriptive projects, but other 20% for tier 2 projects.
 - Eric – LCBP is broader and has more resource, but balance is still difficult. If someone has an idea that sits within strategic plan, it should be considered. At same time, prioritization of issues is okay in each research cycle.
 - Breck – We can't preclude submissions from consideration, so it is a matter of how much emphasis we place on certain topics
 - Leigh – Notion of a pre-determined percentage split means you may be forced to turn down a high-quality proposal for a lesser proposal.
 - Ashley – Perhaps there is a non-rigid way to bucket projects
 - Holden S - Likes the prescriptive model, especially having research topics and funding projects on environmental justice, climate resiliency, and/or tribal ways of knowing. This would help work towards the second recommendation from the site review to search for 'opportunities for research, education, outreach for underrepresented/underserved communities.'
- Balance of projects and fellowships
 - Current division is 4-5 research projects (650k) and 1-2 co-funded research fellowships for 1-2 years (100k), is this where we want to be? Is it worth investing in fellowships at all, more, or leave alone?
 - Could have fellows at multiple levels. For example: Suma Lashoff with TNC was a fellow with a recent bachelor recipient
 - Caroline and Holden support fellowships
 - Sonal - NJ has an amazing Watershed Ambassador Program through AmeriCorps and NJDEP. I was a part of this program after undergrad and it was transformative for my life.
<https://www.nj.gov/dep/wms/bears/amicorps.htm>
 - Eric - Invasive species fellowship with LCBP is a possibility.
 - Tom – in favor of continuing and growing fellowship program to spread benefits and build capacity. build. Could benefit NY even more.
 - Leigh – NY does not have as many NGOs, can we offer for undergrads and support NY growth
 - Chris - supports growth of fellowship program
 - Phelan – Urge us to support people gaining expertise, which will allow them to influence fundamental structures in future
 - Holden - fellowship funding is important as it hits not only the site review recommendations but LCSG-stated goals earlier in the discussion. Especially given current limited funding and employment

opportunities for this type of work, getting a fellowship could be the difference between someone focusing their career in environmental work or not.

- Crea – Supports as a professional development opportunity for NGO how does this support business community?
 - Breck - the insurance industry is one great example of a possible business-fellowship opportunity.