

LCSG Program Advisory Committee Meeting
February 10, 2022
Meeting minutes

Attendees

PAC members: Erin Vennie-Vollrath, Eric Howe, Ahren von Schnell (Ex Officio), Chris Navitsky, Crea Lintilhac, Dan Albrecht, Dan Kelting, Emily Bird, George Burrill, Holden Sparacino, Jacob Plante (Ex Officio), Kara Lenorovitz, Lori Fisher, Mark Malchoff, Melody Mackin, Sonal Patel-Dame, Tessa Schneider (Ex Officio), Tom Berry (Ex Officio), Joshua Brown (Program Officer, Ex Officio)

LCSG staff: Ashley Eaton, Kris Stepenuck, Julianna White, Breck Bowden, Alison Adams, Aude Lochet, Caroline McKelvey, Cassie Wolfanger, Chief Don Stevens, Gary Deziel, Jill Sarazen, Linda Patterson, Mark Mitchell, Nate Trachte, Shari Halik, Theo Willis, Timothy Mihuc,

- Icebreaker
 - Name, affiliation, and favorite place in the basin in the chat
- Introduction of new PAC member
 - Melody Mackin, Atowi Project
- Introduction of new LCSG staff since last PAC meeting
 - Mark Mitchell, Lakes Monitoring and Community Outreach Coordinator; co-position with VT DEC, looking for ways to improve outreach and get more Vermonters involved in lake monitoring
 - Kate Warner, Watershed Alliance graduate program assistant; PhD student studying cyanobacteria blooms; will transition in role for LCSG to program development for K-12 watershed education next summer and Women in STEM in sailing (from logistics and school communications for watershed education programming, which will be taken on by a new incoming graduate student)
 - Jill Sarazen, Green Infrastructure Collaborative Coordinator; co-position with VT DEC
 - Chief Don Stevens, Chief of Nulhegan Tribe of Abenaki, Indigenous education; co-position with Shelburne Farms
 - Anna Marchessault, Program Support Assistant, begins April 4
- Questions from PAC to new staff members:
 - None!
- High level overview of LCSG outreach and research during 2022 and 2023 (Kris)
 - Bigger staff team than in the past
 - Outreach and education team – ~50 projects in 6 areas
 - Build environmental awareness, promote stewardship and enhance resilience
 - Strengthen community resilience
 - Provide workforce development to enhance DEI and watershed knowledge and skills
 - Offer watershed education and professional development for students and teachers
 - Support stormwater management through nature-based solutions
 - Ensure watershed health and sustainability
 - LEAP – Lake Education and Action Program is an internship program led by Poultney Mettowee NRCO for high school students doing outreach and projects with landowners, education on best management for shorelands. Added 3 new watershed group partners in 2021 and will add one from NY in 2022.
 - 5 new research projects with two-year Sea Grant funding. Focusing on:

- DEI, Environmental Justice: Increase environmental literacy among K-12 teachers and BIPOC students
 - Green infrastructure and clean water initiatives: Evidence-based floodplain crediting protocol to meet water quality goals
 - Lake food webs: Lake trout stocking strategies using next-gen genetic tools
 - Local foods, food security, aquaculture: Evaluate drivers of contaminant exposure risk among angling groups
 - Shoreline habitat protection, restoration, management: Support persistence and recovery of diverse turtle community
 - Sea Grant Scholars – undergraduates that receive academic scholarships, professional development and summer internships. First cohort of 8 mid-way through. Applications due March 1 for next year’s cohort.
 - Graduate assistantships, and post-graduate fellowships –
 - Graduate assistantships: Watershed Alliance (2 graduate assistants; Kate and one coming in summer 2022). LCBP and LCSG co-funded aquatic nuisance species grad student coming this summer.
 - Fellows: Audubon (Cassie Wolfanger), Knauss (Caitlin Feehery, National Ocean Service front office Washington DC). Two new partnered fellowships just announced: Ausable River Association and Paul Smith’s College Adirondack Watershed Institute, both focused on science communications
- Deeper overview: Watershed Forestry Partnership (Alison)
 - Partnership supports research, communication, and collaboration of forest and riparian restoration projects
 - Podcast to inform partners about relevant new research, best practices, etc. And be accessible to average, interested people
 - Monthly podcast, 5 produced so far
 - Check them out on LCSG website and on multiple listening platforms
 - Addressing native tree stock shortage
 - Survey of folks in VT who work on the supply and demand side of tree stock for planting.
 - 130K trees sold as stock in VT; Half purchased from out of state; Demand to increase by 50%
 - Currently: stakeholder conversations, working to hold focus group sessions, guidance document updates
 - Riparian Buffer Practitioners meeting March 30-31
 - Questions / comments
 - Dan Albrecht – Clean Water Service Providers (CWSPs) throughout state (Dan is one) will have funds for non-regulatory water quality projects – subgrants, etc. Opportunities for Watershed Forestry Partnership.
 - Chief Don working on a watershed forestry project. Are there state or LCSG or LCBP funds available for Vermonters to create businesses growing tree seedlings? Kris and Alison are exploring this – through conservation innovation grants and others. Working with 350.org who are giving away trees
 - Tom Berry: VT FWD is working now on seed and seedling collection, working to establish a seed bank, especially for their work in the Magog basin. Contact at VT FWD for Alison: Pete Emerson peter.emerson@vermont.gov St. Johnsbury office

- Crea Lintilhac : Watersheds United, interval greenhouse to produce more native trees, question, what are the plans in the state to expand nurseries to grow more native trees? Will LCSG help Intervale expand native tree nursery?
 - Intervale likely can't expand to be large enough to meet capacity
 - Other barriers beyond funds include workforce development, and knowledge needed on specific sets of practices
 - The market is not consistent – nurseries don't know how many trees they need to grow, and many trees need to be 1-2 years old which is hard to predict
 - Think about this
 - Dan Kelting: What's up with the work in NY? Alison – learning the layout, very different from VT, some folks from NY will attend March practitioners meeting
 - Erin Vennie-Vollrath: has a better idea of what is going on in the NY side now more than a year ago, Asked about disconnect in timing with tree availability: Alison agrees is an issue – problem with timing on needing to request way before funding is in hand. Thinking about how to develop having an overall organization determining need across the broader basin area so that supply is available.
 - Eric Howe: NY DEC used to run a tree nursery in Saratoga. Erin – still operating but sells out quickly. Also, partners are talking about this within LCBP. On Williston town conservation commission, this is an issue that town has not been able to address. Guidance for groups? How to plan for municipal groups, etc.? Whether identifying lands, etc.
 - https://www.lcbp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/64_Intervale-Riparian-Restoration-Final_2012.pdf
 - Theo: Need for restoration planting for wetland plants and trees has been discussed and marries in with dairy farmers' needs for supplemental income
 - Gary: opportunity to collaborate with UVM Farm Business program (Tony Kitsos)
 - Chief Don: consider biochar – there is a Nulhegan Abenaki family company working on this
 - Theo: We've been discussing biochar as a filtration component in aquaculture systems as well. It primes the biochar with nutrients and then it can be used as a fertilizer.
 - Dan Kelting: Several of us have been discussing establishing a tree nursery for restoration purposes on the former Cornell farm in Lake Placid
 - Mark Malchoff: Why is natural growth/succession of trees not enough for riparian restoration, especially with management of invasives? Alison: in some cases that works but not always.
 - Crea: Sounds like you need something like the Center for Ag Economy to bring predictability to a supply chain for tree stock
 - Kris: Should we try to establish/host a [Plant Material Center](#) here in the basin (as both a research facility and native tree source)?
- BREAK
 - Setting the stage for strategic planning for next cycle Feb 2024-Jan 2028
 - Potential base funding increase and one-time funding opportunities – Breck (slides)
 - Federal funding forecast scenarios
 - Larger ask in FY 22 and 23 is due to focus on coastal resilience, DEI initiatives, and aquaculture

- Potential for Sea Grant to get 1M in one time funding to focus on coastal debris prevention and removal, guidance still coming
 - Organizational opportunity to institutionalize the LCSG Institute to encompass LCSG, VT Water Center, Northeastern States Research Cooperative, CIROH
 - PAC: Breck may reach out to PAC to check in for stakeholder support for LCSG Institute if push for move to OVPR at UVM
 - Drone level view of LCSG staff [knowledge areas] expertise – Gary (slides)
 - Knowledge in Environmental Sciences, next in water quality monitoring and then a bunch of other items, such as forestry, policy, road salt mgmt, etc.
 - Skill sets – grants mgmt, education of adults and children
 - Overview of plan to gather input from across the basin (Spring 2022) – Kris (timeline slide)
 - Break out group plan and ground rules – Kris (slides)
- Breakout rooms
 - Conversations in breakout rooms focused on three questions to inform LCSG strategic planning for 2024-2028:
 - Are there important gaps that LCSG could fill to best support the environment and economies of the Lake Champlain basin through 1) outreach; 2) research; or 3) formal education programs?
 - How should LCSG invest in potential one-time and base funding increases?
 - What subject matter boundaries should LCSG maintain or set?
 - Summary from breakout rooms
 - Conversations included brainstorming about possible new positions to take advantage of new funding opportunities, new technologies, and to reach new partners/audiences through outreach and workforce development
 - Also, ideas shared to address emerging topics (e.g., emerging contaminants, native plants and art, native seedlings, water quality/levels, flooding, indigenous knowledge) and broaden education and outreach initiatives (e.g., aquaculture, volunteer monitoring), partnering across the lake to benefit all
 - Flexibility and wise decision-making were mentioned in more than one breakout room
- LCSG in the coming year (Breck, slides)
 - Summary of temporary and extended workforce changes expected and plans to keep the team strong