
Comité directeur du comité Québec-Vermont / Quebec-Vermont Steering Committee

DRAFT Meeting Minutes

19 Novembre 2019 à 9h30 / November 19, 2019 at 9:30 am

Eastside Restaurant, 47 Landing Street, Newport VT

Attendees

David Blodgett, USDA-NRCS

Tom Berry, Office of US Senator Leahy

Ben Copans, VT DEC

Mary Pat Goulding, MWA

David Converse, MWA

Peter Emerson, VT FWD

Maxime Veilletti, MCI

Robert Benoit, MCI

Nathalie Gobeil, MAPAQ

Julie Grenier, COGESAF

Jean-Pierre Fortier, Ville de Sherbrooke

Josiane Pouliot, Ville de Magog

Alexandra Roy, MNA

Solveig Landry, Ville de Magog

David Largy-Nadeau, MRC Memphremagog

Pete LaFlamme, VT DEC

Nathalie Provost, MELCC, DGAE

Steven Poulos, MWA

Jean-Francois Cloutier, MELCC

Arian Orjikh, MCI

Oliver Pierson, VT DEC

Frank Maloney, NVDA Vermont

Lindsay Miller, VT DEC

Fritz Gerhardt, Connecticut River Conservancy

Beth Torpey, MWA

Welcome, Adoption of Agenda and Minutes – Pete LaFlamme

Corrections to the May 2019 minutes

Peter Emerson proposes edit to item 8 to read “raises contradiction and regulation”; delete rest of sentence

Add Josiane Pouliot, her name was not listed in last meeting’s minutes even though she was present

Roundtable: updates since last meeting

Nathalie Provost and Jean-Francois Cloutier, MELCC

- Working to finalize water quality action plan project, first draft a year and a half ago but hope to have action plan ready at next meeting
- April/May flood, expecting new or revised regulations around development of floodplain projects by end of year
- There is a regional issue of contaminated soils and strengthening laws to Try to improve soil/sediment – but no information about this issue in the Lake Memphremagog watershed.
- Hired additional staff at Sherbrooke regional office

Stephen Poulos, MWA

- Replacing Kendall at MWA

- Helping revise IJC report
- Retrofit some Newport stormwater projects
- 18 LakeWise assessments in the VT side, hoping to start implementation

Ariane Orjikh, MCI

- Busy with IJC, reviewing translation of 230 pages, will be online, encourage folks to review as part of public comment period
- Busy with angler survey
- WQ monitoring and zebra mussel surveys, including Ca samples
- Report from McGill on zebra mussels

Oliver Pierson and Lindsay Miller, VT DEC

- TMDL approved in 2017
- Working with the City of Newport and Vermont Land Trust on obtaining permits for recreational path extension

Frank Maloney, NVDA

- On the planning commission, helping towns implement tactical basin plan projects and acquire funding
- Assisting Newport with rec path, stormwater and road projects
- Most involved in transportation WQ projects

Pete Emerson, VT FWD

- Working on basin education project in North Country Union, Brighton, Millers Run Schools (CFES in NY), hope to link into Memph work

David Converse, MWA

- New president of MWA
- New projects in Curtis Bay
- Active in LakeWise, educating landowners on best management practices, also implementing some 3rd grade education programs

Mary Pat Goulding, MWA

- Former president of MWA
- MWA is still facilitating stormwater collaborative

Ben Copans, VT DEC

- Continuing to sample 8 farms in the watershed (with Sarah Damsell)
- Just got final farm monitoring data, will be looking at results this winter
- Black, Barton, Clyde, Johns trib sampling now done by Sarah Damsell
- Monitoring year – 30 assessments of biological condition
- Working with Lake Salem on restoration project at public beach in Derby

Tom Berry, Office of US Senator Leahy

- Continued resolution
- House should pass second continuing resolution today and move it to Senate
- No word of shutdown

- Federal funding supports and funds Great Lake fisheries and IJC work, that bill has been essentially adopted by Senate committee, has \$500k for work in the Lake Memphremagog watershed focused on fisheries habitat improvements.
- NRCS work thru USDA, looks to be adopted in the near future

Dave Blodgett, USDA NRCS

- Visit farms, assess resources, develops conservation plan
- Offer financial assistance for BMPs identified in conservation plan and improve soil quality.
- 200-400 cow farms getting waste storage facilities and a whole farm nutrient plan
- Working with 4 separate farms on grazing plans that include fencing to keep animals from streams
- Worked with 10 farms to reduce tillage on 500 acres and get cover crop on 1000 acres

Max Veillette, MCI

- Creel surveys in collaboration with Pete Emerson of VT FWD
- Completed a full year of sampling, trying to answer what is the fishing pressure year-round?
- +3000 surveys to analyze
- Funding from great lake fisheries commission
- Mostly positive/good responses from anglers

Robert Benoit, MCI

- Busiest year in 53 years, 9 employees on the water
- Several universities involved including a PhD candidate
- Working on PFAS with leachate, a 4 year break on leachate going to WWTF in the watershed
- MCI and DUMP to meet tomorrow (11/20) to discuss
- Looking ahead to next year of sampling

Nathalie Gobeil, Quebec Ministry of Ag

- Sustainable ag plans that relate to minimal pesticide use and soil conservation

Julie Grenier, COGESAF

- Developing Sherbrooke/Magog water intake action plans to protect these intakes
- Groundwater characterization, report due 2020
- Working with MRC on wetland and stream protection plans
- Working on IJC nutrient reference

Jean-Pierre Fortier, Ville de Sherbrooke

- Completed inspection of city water intake, some zebra mussels noted in the intake, largest one about ¾-inch

Josiane Poulliot, Ville de Magog

- Many people hired to work this summer
- Shoreline erosion
- Hydro geomorphic study to examine sediments coming down Castle Brook will be completed soon
- Septic tank inspections
- Monitoring WQ on tributaries with MRC
- Blue flag certification on beaches using falcons to scare birds off

- Emergency plans for flooding and hopefully climate change planning

Alexandra Roy,

- Work has shifted to a more provincial level now, less MRC
- Now involved with the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence Legislative Caucus work which has been informative to see how they handle nutrient loading
- Continuing work with MRC on the Landfill Oversight Committee
- Working on PFAS and adding a drinking water regulation

Solveig Landry, Ville de Magog

- Zebra mussel collection during the summer
- Have not analyzed results yet, but expecting them by end of 2019 or early 2020
- Collected more than 3000

David Largy-Nadeau, MRC

- Working on awareness campaign
- Annual trib sampling, will produce report for MRC website shortly

Pete LaFlamme, VT DEC

- Working to support IJC report and impressed with the group working on this effort
- Continue to work on implement regulations that were part of Act 64 passed in 2015
Act 76 was passed in 2019 which increases clean water funding and sets up clean Water Service Providers for Lake Memphremagog and Champlain Basins to support getting funding on the ground
- New stormwater 3-acre rule
- Municipal General Roads Permit still in early stages but towns are moving towards inventory of roads
- Implementing non-regulatory improvements
- Looking for alternatives to discharging leachate, just started reviewing the report of options
- Report on PFAS drinking water and revised water quality standards are due in 2020

Presentations

Pete Emerson & Fritz Gerhardt – Floodplain Forest Restoration Experiment 2016-2019

- TBP strategy 51: continue buffer plantings along rivers in priority locations through CRPE, Trees for Streams, VTFW
- Recent conservation efforts have shown high levels of natural recruitment of riparian tree species on cultivated lands which raised the question as to if former hay fields/pastures be cultivated to stimulate recruitment of floodplain species (box elder, silver maple)?
- TBP strategy 52: continue experimentation of novel methods to encourage faster and more efficient means to reclaim cleared lands
- Compared plowed, herbicide/plowed, and plowed/herbicide plots – best outcome on larger plots that are immediately adjacent to existing floodplain forests - herbicide appeared to improve recruitment in the longer term vs just plowing.
- VTFW-owned riparian parcels in St J fisheries District (108 different parcels) Most are 1-rod (16.5 ft wide)

- Got an Ecosystem restoration grant to hire a consultant to assess and prioritize parcels for riparian restoration or additional acquisition to improve fisheries habitat and water quality.

David Largy-Nadeau – “Fight for your lake” Awareness Campaign

- Promoting education on invasive species including the message clean, wash, dry
- Produced video clips that reached 95k people
- Also postcards written in French/English to hand out
- Received some complaints at the boat washing station about the need to wash
- Doing a report with McGill – knowledge acquisition and document the invasion, control populations with diving, monitoring expansion
- Will share the full report once McGill has completed analyses
- Not entirely clear if zebras will colonize aggressively, but if quagga arrived they would more certainly take hold
- Ultraviolet lamps close to water intake lines and the importance of both VT and CAN prominently promoting boat wash are highlighted in this report.

Ben Copans – tracking phosphorus loading reductions

- Memphremagog TMDL established in 2017
- TBP gets revised/updates every 5 years
- Tracking = state funding + federal funding + regulatory programs
- Clean Water Reporting Framework (CWRP) and BMP Accounting and Tracking (BATT)
- Compares measures for ag lands, developed lands, and transportation
- Estimated 1104 kg load reduction (7% of the TMDL reduction target of 15220 kg annually) currently – may change once annual report is produced in January 2020
- Annual conservation practices (cover cropping, no-till) make up most of the estimated load reductions
- Looking at subwatersheds to get an idea of where all these practices are going in to place

Ben Copans, Ariane Orjikh, Beth Torpey, Julie Grenier – the IJC Memphremagog reference study

- MSAG formed (similar to Lake Champlain CSAG) and they guided the drafting of this report by MCI and MWA which will go out on public notice 11/25/19 for 30 days of public notice
- Review of existing management of Memph – key stakeholders in the watershed, inventory of nutrient management
- Science and policy analyses
- Suggestions for BMPs
- Recommendations for a binational approach – establish watershed nutrient loading reduction goals, adopt practical solutions through BMPs and other projects, strengthen cooperation through Quebec-Vermont Steering Committee
- Discussion of the Steering Committee’s “formality”; do we need an update to our MOU (currently the Memph one has no expiration)? Do we need to establish a whole new position/person to manage the administrative and logistics of the meetings? One neutral, bilingual individual who can oversee operations of the committee fulltime and without partisan. Duties currently get shifted between steering committee members as time allows.
- Uncertainty expressed over the term “solutions”, cannot change the report right now but can go comment on the report publicly
- Putting a public face on the steering committee? Is there a need to hire a full time, bilingual staffer to coordinate meetings, maintain a website, organize logistics

- Discussion on increasing the meeting frequency of the technical subcommittee, it was determined that 2x a year was still suitable for the Steering Committee as a whole
- Tom Berry indicated he would help move our need for logistical/administrative support back into the IJC's court

Additional discussion

- Oliver Pierson asked about VT Lake Score Card – is the “blue” trend misleading to the public? Is there room for improving the display to better convey the WQ data?
- Jean-Francois Cloutier compares the message of “restore versus protect”. Memph and Yamaska River; which one is more “deserving” in terms of attention, time, and resources?
- Pete Emerson provided a bullhead update: tested largemouth, yellow perch, and bullhead in and out of the basin; results between South Bay and headwater ponds were unclear and there may not be a relationship between the 60 contaminants and the lesions. Is there something occurring naturally?

Adjourn and next meeting

The next meeting is planned for May 12th, 2020 in Magog at the Hermitage Club at 9:30 AM. Send topics for agenda to Jean-Francois Cloutier, about 2-3 weeks prior to meeting

Meeting adjourned at 3:08pm.