

November 18, 2020

Dear LaRosa Partners,

We are excited to announce the return of the LaRosa Partnership Program (LPP) in 2021 under a new and improved model. The overall goals of the program – to provide priority, meaningful water quality monitoring data for DEC and LaRosa partners through citizen science – as well as the monitoring objectives, remain the same. We will continue to support the program’s analytical costs as budgeted annually at \$100,000. However, we will no longer require a Request for Proposals (RFP) process and instead rely on a truly collaborative, partnership-based model.

We greatly value the work of the LPP, the passion you share for water quality monitoring, and the time and effort you, as well as your volunteers, have invested. This new program model seeks to increase both the efficiency of administering as well as participating in the program, allowing us both to focus on what matters most – water quality monitoring. For the organizations that received LaRosa Organizational Support Grants to offset the costs previously associated with this work, most of those tasks will no longer be required. The changes described below build upon our collective experience administering the program as interest has grown over the last several years and seek to address the challenges many of you have expressed through the Lean process in 2019 and beyond. The new model eliminates:

- DEC staff development of the RFP;
- Partner preparation of and submittal of detailed project proposals;
- Contract processes for partners and DEC staff;
- Partner preparation and submittal of individual Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPPs);
- Partner lab tasks, including bottle orders, sampling plans, and sample delivery and login; and
- Partner data analysis and annual reporting.

Site Selection

Basin planners will seek your input on priority monitoring sites, and LPP staff will develop an annual sampling plan building on that input, as well as input from Watershed Management Division staff. Watershed organizations that wish to recommend a previously initiated site or project, such as those proposed in response to the 2020 LaRosa Analytical Support Grant Request for Proposals, are encouraged to communicate those priorities to their basin planner. LPP staff will finalize and publicize the sampling plan, asking watershed organizations to select specific sites they are interested in and capable of sampling. Watershed organizations will be given priority to sample stream sites in their basin. LPP staff will confirm with partners the sites they will be sampling and provide the necessary training and supplies.

Sampling Design

The objectives and sampling design are consistent with what the LPP has used for many years, and, most recently, the objectives in the 2020 LaRosa Analytical Services Grant RFP. The monitoring objectives are: (1) identify or refine the extent of stressed/impaired streams; (2) identify tributaries that may be contributing to increasing total phosphorus concentrations in lakes; (3) identify very high quality streams; and (4) evaluate BMP or remediation effort effectiveness. Sampling will occur every 10 – 14 days from May through August with a minimum of eight base-flow sampling events and two high-flow sampling events. Sampling can occur on the days of the week that best suit partners’ schedules and samples can be held until pick-up by LPP staff. The shorter field season will meet the sampling objectives while allowing LPP staff to fulfill other monitoring and assessment duties.

In 2021, the sampling parameters will be total phosphorus, nitrogen, and chloride, with field observations of flow level, flow type, and weather. These parameters all have relatively long hold times and indicate the potential presence of pollutants from a variety of land uses.

Quality Assurance, Data Analysis, and Reporting

The LPP staff will develop a single Quality Assurance Project Plan and train partners in QA/QC for sample collection and storage. Arrangements will be made for LPP staff to pick up and deliver samples to the lab in Randolph every two weeks. Regional sample storage locations will be arranged with the partners for efficiency, and partners will store samples until the specified pick-up day. LPP staff will provide annual data analysis, graphing, and online reporting. Those partners who wish to continue to write short summary reports are welcome to do so, although this will not be required for participation. Finalized data will be available online through the Integrated Watershed Information System (IWIS) the following winter.

Informational Meeting

We will follow up by email to schedule a virtual meeting in early December to review and discuss these changes with you and to respond to your questions. We will also post frequently asked questions and responses to the LPP website at <https://dec.vermont.gov/watershed/map/monitor/larosa>.

We are sincerely excited about this new model and look forward to a successful sampling season in 2021. With your partnership, we will continue to provide priority water quality monitoring data through the LPP to support our shared surface water restoration and protection goals. If you have questions or concerns about these changes, please contact me at Bethany.Sargent@vermont.gov or 802-490-6131.

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bethany Sargent". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Bethany Sargent
Monitoring and Assessment Program Manager