

## LaRosa Program Testimonials

“The LaRosa partnership program has allowed BRAT to begin the important work of assembling baseline data on the Black River for the first time in history. In just a couple more years, we expect to be able to begin tracking trends and noticing potential problems on the river, and use that as a conversation starter in the community as well as a tool to begin implementing projects with landowners to improve water quality”

-Kelly Stettner, Black River Action Team

"With the assistance of the LaRosa Partnership Program, the Memphremagog Watershed Association has been able to collect and analyze water samples that have been incredibly valuable in allowing us to identify water quality issues in the Lake Memphremagog Basin, to work with landowners and land managers to correct water quality issues once they have been identified, and, at times, to alert the State of Vermont to water quality violations, where enforcement actions are (unfortunately) necessary. Through this partnership, these efforts have led to noticeable improvements in water quality in the Lake Memphremagog Basin. Without the support of the LaRosa Partnership Program, none of this work would have been possible."

– Fritz Gerhardt, Memphremagog Watershed Association

“The LaRosa Program has been extremely beneficial in helping us achieve our water quality goals. The program provides analysis of our water samples for phosphorous and turbidity. The resulting data established over the past eight years has pinpointed where we need to concentrate our efforts on the Lake Carmi tributaries. The data has served as a basis for requesting grants to fund projects to improve the Lake Carmi watershed. The data has also helped us identify other areas in the watershed to sample. The fact that the water sampling analysis as well as the water sampling supplies are provided at no cost makes the LaRosa Program an invaluable and indispensable tool to the Franklin Watershed Committee. It must also be noted that the staff at the LaRosa Lab have always been very helpful and very responsive. Thank you very much!”

- Peter Benevento, Franklin Watershed Association

“The LaRosa program has enabled landowners and watershed groups to collect water samples in simple, effective, and cost efficient means. By providing tools, training, and data analysis, landowners in Vershire, West Fairlee, and Thetford were able to collect current, relevant data on the health of the Ompompanoosuc. The LaRosa program has restarted and retooled local efforts to mitigate water quality concerns in the watershed and is moving the community into action. Following up on the 2015 water monitoring season, local conservation commissions, volunteers, and watershed groups are developing conservation practices and outreach materials to educate, engage and enable Ompompanoosuc landowners in turning the curve towards a healthier watershed”.

-Mary Childs, Ompompanoosuc Watershed Council/White River NRCD

“The Missisquoi River Basin Association has been testing the waters of the main stem of the Missisquoi River, and its tributaries since 2005. After 10 odd years of existence as a nonprofit, we felt we had the critical mass needed to gather a team of volunteers who could collect samples of water from our very large watershed (two counties/two countries), on a biweekly basis. The information gained by the groups of volunteers has had several notable effects, which I'll detail below.

1. The establishment of a set of data which now allows us to compare what was “normal” to the Missisquoi River’s main stem, with what might happen in the future. Previously there was no known entity with any long-term information about the chemical makeup of the Missisquoi River.

2. We were able to very quickly identify one major tributary “MUD CREEK”, as a major contributor of sediment loading, and phosphorous. This tributary drains the regions around Newport Town, and North Troy along the eastern most part of the watershed, and up along the Canadian border. It is the site of some hilly farm land, which is intensively farmed. Since then, there have been many projects/riparian tree plantings put in place to help try to alleviate the phosphorous contributions. However, there’s still a lot to do in that part of the watershed, as it continues to be a major contributor of phosphorus.
3. Canadian land use practices in place on the Missisquoi river in Canada actually help reduce the phosphorus in the river, before it reenters the USA in E. Richford. It was noticed early on in the program, that the phosphorus and turbidity levels increased along the main stem of the Missisquoi until it entered Canada at N. Troy. When the water reentered Vermont at E. Richford, those levels were noticeably reduced. They however would continue to climb as the river flowed towards Lake Champlain in the west.
4. Hungerford Brook was really unknown to our group in the beginning phases of our testing program. We didn’t realize that the farms along 105 near St. Albans, VT were all drained by this brook which flowed northeast into the Missisquoi river. It turned out that Hungerford Brook along with Mud Creek are the top two identifiable sources of phosphorus amongst the tributaries. Since we tagged this brook, there has been a sustained effort to reestablish riparian buffers along its many small branches.
5. Black Creek is not as serious an influence on the phosphorus loading in the Missisquoi, but it is still significant. The upper reaches of the tributary near Jeffersonville and Fletcher, run through alder wetlands. But the towns of Fairfield and Sheldon are hilly agricultural regions where intensive farming occurs, contributing phosphorus and siltation.

What can we hope for in the future? I would like to spend some time doing longitudinal studies of each tributary. I think it would be very helpful to everyone if we knew where hot spots occurred along the tributaries, or maybe more importantly, what happens as you work down the length of the sub watersheds. In addition, I imagine it will become more important in the future to be keeping an eye on the E-coli contributions from the Missisquoi, and envision starting a new component of the testing program with that in mind.

What are the current challenges we face in maintaining this testing program? I can summarize the challenges in three easy ways. Firstly, finding and maintaining loyal volunteers who have the time and inclination during the day to spend one to several hours once every fort night throughout the warmer part of our year. These folks tend to be older, retired individuals, and it is nearly impossible to find working age folks to help. Secondly, the logistics of getting bottles distributed in a timely manner over the entire watershed. Then when the sample bottles are full, they must be collected and driven long distances in the end of the day to the state lab, where ever that happens to be. Thirdly, we need someone to “crunch the numbers”. We have had to outsource this over the years, and have had three different individuals over the past ten years provide this function for us. There must be a better answer. Wouldn’t it make more sense to have all the data collected from all over the state be analyzed by the same individual?

In short, I really can’t say enough good for the assistance we’ve been afforded over the years by the EPA/LAROSA LAB partnership”.

-John Little, Missisquoi River Basin Association

“Addison County Riverwatch Collaborative was offered the opportunity to use the LaRosa lab services to process the samples we collect on 6 rivers and streams around 2003. When water sampling efforts began in Addison County, sampling happened in the summer only, and we hired a person to process the samples one of the labs of the local high school personnel usually changed every year, and was of unpredictable quality. One summer, all of our samples had to be thrown out due to faulty lab work. We then moved to taking samples to a professional lab for several years. Both of these required financial resources

which were very limited. Partnering with LaRosa freed up those financial resources, but more than that, LaRosa guidance helped us to tighten up our sampling protocols, and begin thinking longer and wider about why we were sampling at sites, and how we could best use our resources. After more than 12 years of partnership with LaRosa, I would say that that partnership is the foundation of the growth ACRWC has been able to make as an effective water sampling group”.

-Heidi Willis, Addison County Riverwatch Collaborative

“The VT DEC LaRosa Analytical Services program benefits the SCRW water monitoring program by providing free lab analyses in turn for EPA approved stream data that is needed by both state and local water managers and stewardship planners. While SCRW exists to monitor stream water quality, its growing network of public and private partners uses annual data interpretation reports to inform water quality education, outreach and improvement projects that include land use conservation practices and policy and regulation upgrades. This includes determinations of compliance with Vermont Water Quality Standards and TMDL implementation plans”.

- Marty Illick, Lewis Creek Association

“The data generated through the efforts of the Town staff and the LaRosa laboratory since 2007 have been critical toward establishing a suite of baseline water quality information for Allen Brook. These data have been used to inform policy decisions within the Town to identify where our limited resources should be targeted to have the best bang for our buck to reduce storm water impacts to the Allen Brook in Williston. We look forward to continuing this partnership with the LaRosa program on Allen Brook and expanding it to Muddy Brook, another impaired waterway that we share with a neighboring town”.

-Melinda Scott, Williston Conservation Commission