

Comments on the DRAFT Northern Lake Champlain Basin Plan Update (2017)

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I have been commenting on the subject of pollution in Lake Champlain for a few years now, primarily in and around St. Albans bay. My wife and I own a summer camp on the Georgia shore. To your printed opinion that manure isn't the primary culprit; My opinion is that of course it is. When manure, especially, in the liquid form is spread on a field that is raw, no sod, it is primed for erosion with the first rains. When the rains come, the manure heads for the nearest stream/creek/river along with soil it was sitting on. I didn't mention hay in my little scenario because hay is the fix. When I said to Chuck Ross that Farmers in the immediate watershed of St Albans bay need to be encouraged to switch to hay for their cows, he said "I can't tell farmers what to plant". If farmers are being subsidized, the source of those subsidies should, at least, be able to tell the farmers what (not to plant). The process of mono cropping corn is depleting the soil and leaving pollution behind. Mono cropping corn, as I understand it, is the process of planting corn in the same spot year after year. Corn depletes so badly one year, that in following years excess amounts manure, chemical fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides have to be applied just to grow again.

Another point in the article is that even if we stop all the bad things going into the lake, the degradation will take decades to reverse. 2016 was a nearly pristine year for water quality on the Georgia shore. I understand that that was also the case in St Albans bay, the Missisquoi bay and Lake Carmi. I understand there was considerably less snow melt runoff from the mountains that spring but what about the legacy stuff that was supposed to "cook up" from the bottom and keep us in blue green algae even though we stopped putting the "crap" in. I used that word because it was used by one of the lake scientists while describing the staying power of the legacy sediments. The summer of 2016 was hot and still, the water level got low but yet the Georgia shore stayed nearly pristine. The water quality along our shore in 2017 was nearly as good as 2016. Nobody seems interested in why these last two years have been so good from a scientific point of view. Is the legacy sediment far less potent than assumed? There appears to be a lot less corn being planted in the north and east part of St Albans bay watershed. Is that a factor? Does it mean if we can get the excess corn stopped, converted to hay and grass, in the north and west part of the watershed that we will see another such improvement? The north and west part of the watershed, of course, is Jewett Brook, the worst, by far, stream running into the lake and it is running into the top of our little St Albans bay.

How are you doing on the agronomic differences in the eastern vs western parts of the St Albans bay watershed? One further point; On the no till practices you mentioned: I watched a process of cover crop to no till planting in Georgia. I couldn't believe it when I watched the whole field being over-spread with herbicides to kill off the cover-crop roots, apparently to prevent any competition to the new planted corn. Wow, that's a terrible trade off. What do you think?