

South Lake Champlain Workgroup
Southern Lake Champlain Basins Partner Meeting
October 4th, 2012 Meeting
TNC Office – West Haven, VT

Tactical Basin Planning Process overview – Ethan Swift (VANR – Watershed Coordinator)

Ethan provided an overview of “Tactical Basin Planning” which is ANR’s revised approach to watershed planning that provides a targeted focus on waters based on their existing condition. Tactical Basin Planning (TBP) will still include legal requirements, clearly defined roles for partners and stakeholder groups, and use a “report card” format as a means to track implementation and measureable outcomes that should produce more tangible environmental benefits.

TBP will provide a mechanism for identifying strategies to maintain and protect high quality and very high quality waters (identified via monitoring and assessment data), as well as to target waters for remediation and improvement that have been identified as stressed, altered, and impaired.

The TBP process will still rely on a rotational basin planning monitoring, assessment, planning, and an implementation cycle – but will steer towards an expedited process via tighter coordination within the Agency of Natural Resources and concurrent with partner priorities (via the Statewide Surface Water Management Strategy). The rotational cycle will also focus more on specific stressors within basins, or priority sub-basins based on monitoring and assessment data.

Act 138 and Floodplain Management updates – Shannon Pytlik (VANR – River Scientist)

Shannon mentioned that the DEC-River Management Program will be adding a new (third) floodplain coordinator for the State, to be based out of the Rutland state office.

As part of Act 138, there will be provisions for:

Incentives – Act 138 requires ANR to draft a list of incentives for communities that are proactive in protecting remaining floodplain and river corridor assets. Participants will receive higher weighting in many grant programs. Details are yet to be determined but likely to include Water Quality grants as well as community development grants and other state grant. In addition it is likely communities who participate will receive a greater reimbursement rate post disaster for transportation infrastructure damage. Details are still being worked out. Communities have a certain amount of time to be eligible for incentives and greater likelihood of receiving grant awards. Model ordinances are currently in place, accessible via DEC Rivers program website

DEC will make recommendations to legislature for funding floodplain management programs

Green infrastructure strategy unveiled - \$3M in funding to implement this program. Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination will be part of this, and LID projects.

Lake Champlain Phosphorus TMDL revision – reasonable assurance for reducing Non-Point Sources of Phosphorus loading - Mike Middleman (VAAFAM Partner Liaison)

VT needs to tie Best Management Practices (BMPs) to phosphorus (P) reductions and set goals for BMP implementation; challenge is knowing where/how many BMPs are currently in place. Mike is creating a BMP database for AG-Water Quality partners (FSA, NRCS, VAAFAM, SVNMP, etc.). This database will improve efficiency for partners to quickly determine where BMPs have been installed, under what program, etc. Information from the database will also be useful for water quality monitoring and determining if/where/which BMPs have been effective at reducing sedimentation & nutrient loading.

American Great Outdoors (AGO) Edge-of-field monitoring project is under way, evaluating effectiveness of several BMPs, including on one farm in the southern basin.

Agronomist updates – Jen Alexander (SVNMP) and Rico Balzano (UVM-Extension)

- No-till drills (grain drills) have been very popular – at least 1400 acres covered. No-till drills allow for planting of soy, alfalfa, clover, etc. through existing sod, etc without needing to turn over the soil. Also good for interseeding. Over 40 farms participating in this program. Good education program for farmers regarding tilling.
- Airway – reception not as good in Rutland Co as in Addison Co. as there are lighter soils and less liquid manure in Rutland Co. More pasture-based farms interested. Research trials demonstrated that soil aeration was improved using this tool in 2010, under normal weather conditions. 2011 wasn't as successful – but unusual weather conditions. No observed different in yield of crops – quality or quantity.
- Program trying to set up a few farms that will plant small grains in fall, first cut in spring then convert to short season corn and then back to small grains again to serve as good demonstration projects.
- VAAFAM will be providing CFAP funds to farmers to purchase their own no-till planters, etc.
- Livestock exclusion funds available.
- VAAFAM and VACD are an AG Resource Specialist position to replace Sylvia Harris in Rutland County.

VT CAC Updates – Sheri Young (South Lake Rep to the CAC)

Draft VT CAC report to the legislature is focused on funding. Also would like to see better implementation of existing regulations. Waiting to see what funding will be available from Act 138. VLCT submitted a letter on Act 138, included comments requesting BBR funding and mandatory septic system cleanings. Good research project might be looking at how much leaching there is from septic systems into nearby waterbodies. Lake Bomoseen Association folks might be interested in this type of thing, as there are areas of the lake that do not have sewer systems. Another project would be to look at “dead” septic tanks and injecting “live” material into “dead” tanks (i.e., injecting active microbes into inactive septic tanks to “turn them on” prior to summer use). Personal care products can kill bacteria in septic systems – tea tree oil, peppermint, lavender.

USDA – NRCS Update - Jennifer Varin, Zone Conservationist

Farm Bill has expired; this means that NRCS Program Authority has expired, including the Wetland Reserve Program, Grassland Reserve Program, and the Conservation Reserve Program (can still accept applications, although may not be able to do anything with them). Program authority is still in effect for conservation stewardship and EQIP. WHIP probably won't be funded in VT. Other programs may expire in the coming months. Contracts obligated prior to October 1 will still move forward under the expired programs. Bedding packs program may be funded. CAP plans through EQIP will be ranked, no longer first-come, first-served. Interested participant contact information can be recorded for future program enrollment, but applications can't be processed for these programs at this time

Poultney Mettowee NRC Update – Cyd Groff, District Manager (and Hilary Solomon, Project Manager)

The District purchased has a hydroseeder that has been pretty popular. PMNRCD is hosting an open house at the native plant restoration nursery at the college (this is a joint effort between PMNRCD, Green Mtn College and TNC). **Lake related issues (Hilary)** – Sea Grant Watershed Alliance is looking into the need for a South Lake Education Center (in support of Jack Master's statement of need).

Lake St. Catherine has a grant from Hills & Hollows to develop a lakeshore education program for Lake St. Catherine residents.

The Nature Conservancy Update – Paul Marangelo, Conservation Ecologist

Recent focus has been on Aquatic Organism Passage (recently completed a culvert assessment in the Poultney and Mettowee River Basins). TNC just received and ERP grant to do Otter Creek. TNC focused on outreach toward municipalities and remediation of AOP locations. It would be good to cross reference culvert inventories with AOT tools to develop a high priority list for both geomorphic compatibility and for roads. VTRANS is also building a database to do this.

Vtrans Update – James Brady, Environmental Specialist

VTRANS is using ERAF funds (over a 2 year period) to build their damage assessment and culvert replacement database. This database will incorporate the Detailed Damage Inspection Reports (DDIR) which has been developed for many regions around the state in the wake of Irene (especially to identify areas of repeat damage). This is primarily related to state roads affected by Irene though there is a link to town road assessment/ damage.

Lake Bomoseen Update - Jack Master, Water Quality Committee Chair

Jack echoed the need for task #5 in the South lake Workplan (i.e., the need for a South lake Education and Research center). LBA met with Meghan Smith (VT Tourism). Identified need for education center for southern lakes region. Suggested looking into Kehoe Center space for this. Options are being explored over the next few months for the lakes region. Could also be useful for this group as well. Meeting on Nov 1st to discuss better collaboration on Bomoseen issues and develop more shared

objectives as a group and discuss the watershed survey Bomoseen is working on. Will include people from various State agencies.

Other updates:

Lake Champlain Basin Program – Eric Howe, Technical Coordinator

Comments on the South Lake Workplan (September 2012 version)

#38 – FEH mapping – (Shannon) not a lot of activity with FEH mapping; this is why ANR is trying to incentivize towns to do this. State does have FEH maps for many streams in the South Lake already.

LCBP updates:

STATE OF THE LAKE

#2 - CWICNY ARRA project is now complete and available on CWICNY website <http://www.cwicny.org/>

#8 - NYS Stormwater RFP – to be released later this year by LCBP – focus will be on stormwater infrastructure mapping in one+ municipalities

#9 - Impervious surface area project – LCBP awarded a grant to UVM Spatial Analysis Laboratory to develop impervious surface area GIS layer for entire LC basin. Will be done by next spring.

#19 – LCBP-funded South Lake Ag BMP projects are nearly complete, other LCBP implementation grants have also addressed this topic

#38 - CWICNY starting NY-equivalent to the VT Better Back Roads program

#39 - VT-NY DEC skidder bridge project ongoing. Project has built several skidder bridges in VT and established a NY skidder bridge program. Not sure about status of skidder bridge projects in south lake.

#44 - septic pump out program in Lake George completed in several communities last summer (2011), project may have been continued with other funding sources

Missisquoi CSA-like project is being considered for expansion to other watersheds

Lake Champlain Restoration Association - Wally Shonnard

Anaerobic Digestion. Farms like them, but small farms can't afford them. Would be interesting to coordinate the success of the big farms with anaerobic digesters with small farms. Small farms need grants to purchase digesters, as they don't have the capital funds available to make this investment. Researching whether digesting cow manure serves as a source or sink of phosphorus. Anaerobic digestion also reduces pathogens. Digesters also generate biogas, which can be used for fuel cells.

Attending:

Jennifer Alexander, Southern Vermont Nutrient Management Program, Agronomist

Rico Balzano, UVM Extension, Agronomist

James Brady, VT Agency of Transportation, Environmental Specialist

Cyd Groff, Poultney Mettowee NRCD, District Manager

Eric Howe, Lake Champlain Basin Program, Technical Coordinator

Sandy Kuehn, former Lake Champlain Citizens Advisory Committee, South Lake representative

Paul Marangelo, The Nature Conservancy, Conservation Ecologist

Jack Master, Lake Bomoseen Association, Water Quality Committee Chair
Michael Middleman, VT Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets, Technical Partner Liaison
Shannon Pytlik, VT Agency of Natural Resources, River Scientist
Wally Shonnard, Lake Champlain Restoration Association
Hilary Solomon, Poultney Mettowee NRCD, Project Coordinator
Ethan Swift, VT Agency of Natural Resources, Watershed Planner
Jennifer Varin, USDA-NRCS Zone Conservationist
Mike Winslow, Lake Champlain Committee, Staff Scientist
Sheri Young, Lake Champlain Citizens Advisory Committee, South Lake representative

List of Acronyms:

AAFM	Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets
AAPs	Accepted Agricultural Practices
ACRPC	Addison County Regional Planning Commission
AEM	Agricultural Environmental Management
AEP	American Electric Power
AMPs	Acceptable Management Practices (for silviculture)
ANR	Agency of Natural Resources
ARS	Agricultural Resource Specialists
B&C	Bridge and Culvert
BMP	Best Management Practices
CCPI	Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative
CWICNY	Champlain Watershed Improvement Coalition
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
GMC	Green Mountain College
IDDE	Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination
LBA	Lake Bomoseen Association
LCBP	Lake Champlain Basin Program
LCC	Lake Champlain Committee
LCLGRP	Lake Champlain Lake George Regional Planning Board
LCRA	Lake Champlain Restoration Association
LFO	Large farm Operation
LID	Low Impact development
LiDAR	Light Detection and Ranging
MFO	Medium Farm Operation
NEMO	Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials
NMP	Nutrient Management Plan
(NY) DEC	New York Department of Environmental Conservation
ONRCD (VT)	Otter Creek Natural Resource Conservation District
PMNRCD (VT)	Poultney Mettowee Natural Resource Conservation District
RRPC	Rutland Regional Planning Commission
SFO	Small Farm Operation
SVNMP	Southern Vermont Nutrient Management Program
SWCD (NY)	Soil and Water Conservation District (New York)
USDA – NRCS	US Department of Agriculture – Natural Resource Conservation District
VHCB	Vermont Housing and Conservation Board
VLT	Vermont Land Trust

VRC
(VT) DEC

Vermont River Conservancy
Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation