

Friends of
Northern Lake Champlain



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February 6, 2017

VT Legislative Agriculture Committees: Clean Water Report

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For the past 14 years, FNLC has worked to improve water quality in a sustainable and cost effective manner, by increasing the Citizen's Effect around the Northern Arm of Lake Champlain.

The Citizen's Effect is about the processes and consequences of citizens' public engagement with water and each other and the actions they take to make their waters better. If significant water quality improvements are to occur, all citizens must get involved and make a statewide contribution to solve the problems.

FNLC understands that changing practices implemented on the land is less about technology, tools, and technical plans than it is about people – what they think, what they value, and the choices they make. Management is not just regulations and science; it is also what people do.

Historically, FNLC has emphasized the "All-In" philosophy to solving water quality in all of the state's waters. We feel that all VT citizens realize the benefits of clean water. By putting "finger-pointing" aside and promoting the "all-in" philosophy we were able to work with environmental groups, farmers and legislators to help pass Act 64. In regards to finding funding sources for the CWF, we encourage VT legislators to not chase small revenue sources from specific land use groups that don't stand to raise significant revenue and serves to undermine the "all-in" philosophy. The Treasurer's report favors emphasis on "Nexus to Water Quality" which appeals to those who do not reside beside degraded water, but FNLC would submit that Revenue Potential and Sufficiency are the top priorities that will ensure that the "all-in" citizen's effect can proceed in VT.

Specific FNLC Action Steps include:

- The FNLC Advisory Board had the privilege to meet AAFM Deputy Secretary Alyson Eastman and are encouraged that her department will streamline operations and keep transaction administration costs to a minimum.
- FNLC requests that state-raised funds be targeted to our under populated and revenue poor watershed, which is expected to make the most P loss reduction according to EPA.
- To help relieve onerous record keeping and put more funds to work on actual projects, consider **Restoring pass thru funding from the Clean Water Fund to regional and local watershed groups that are playing a significant role in watersheds throughout Lake Champlain.**
- To compliment water quality improvement district utility administration, create a net-zero or no runoff incentive stormwater program for landowners, existing businesses and industrial complexes.
- Incorporate active stream bank stabilization strategies in the discussion of river channel stability. We are extremely concerned that the streambanks represent over 40% of the current phosphorus load to Missisquoi Bay, which exceeds the contribution from cropland.
- While excluding livestock from streams would make a slight difference in water quality, FNLC is not convinced that we should prioritize spending the money that would be required to exclude every cow from every stream. The reports continue to show that the majority of phosphorous in the northern Lake coming from Agriculture is from croplands. Redirecting funds to support more extensive conservation

Comment [JM1]: If this is the 319 money, I think you need to say that explicitly... I would say something like "Restore pass-thru funding from the Section 319 grant program to regional and local watershed groups..."

Comment [K2]:

practices on our croplands would be a much better investment for water quality improvements in Lake Champlain.

FNLC is pleased that for the next two years some funding is available from unspent funds in General Obligation Bonds, an appropriate portion of Transportation Infrastructure Bond Revenue to address new VTrans Storm Water requirements, Municipal Equipment Loan Fund, and maintaining the Property Transfer Tax appropriation.

But we want to finish the work that was done in 2015 and find a truly long term funding source. EPA's Lake Champlain TMDL sets water quality requirements for the State of Vermont and regulations are written into Act 64 which have to be met. If these new regulations are not met, the EPA can step in and demand that Vermont businesses, residents, and farms pay more for less-effective P loss reduction methods. Lack of progress and appropriate state funding will also encourage environmental law groups to enact further litigation against the state. At this juncture, VT cannot afford to sit back and take a two-year time out from establishing a long term funding source.