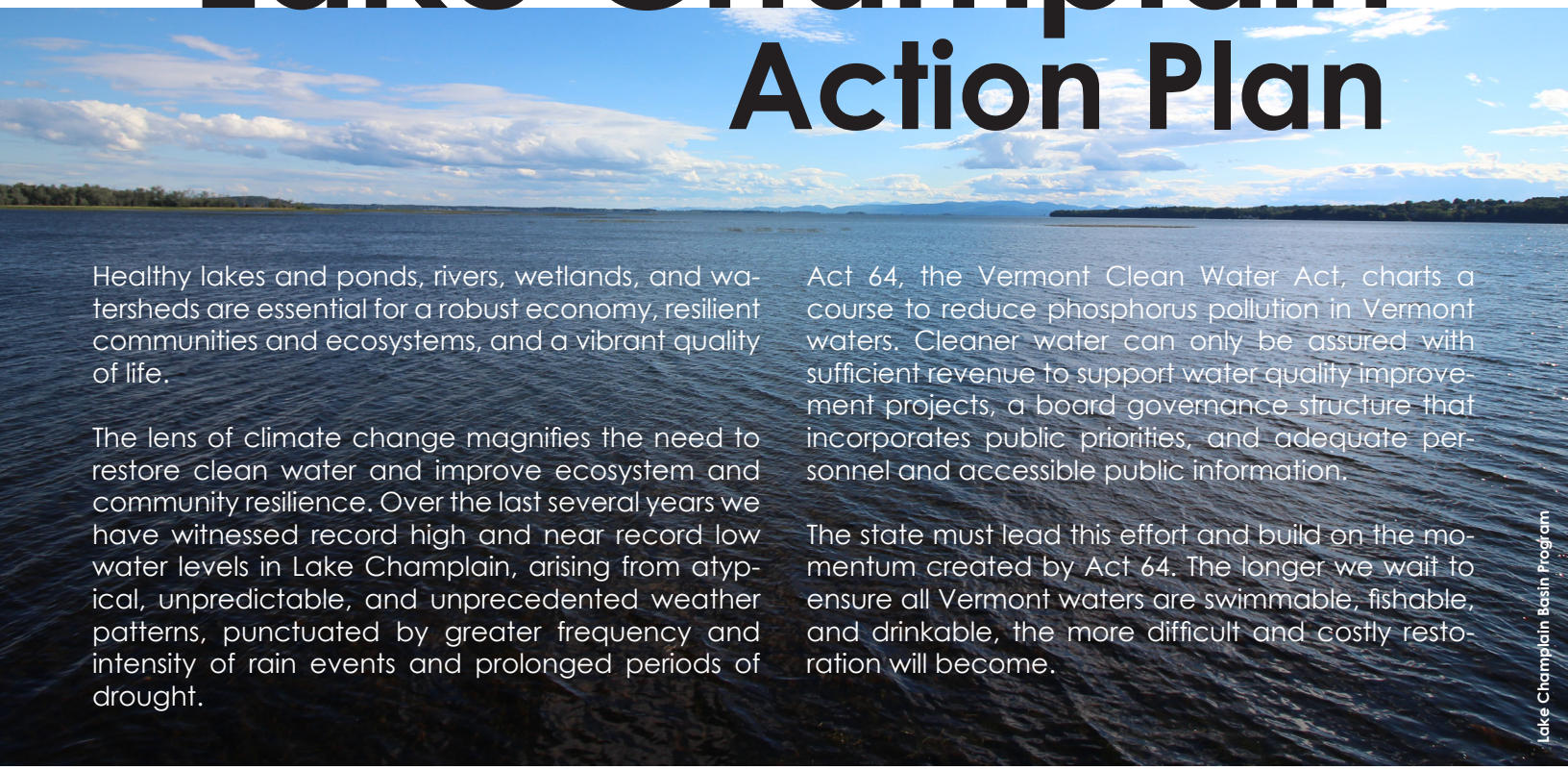
2017 Lake Champlain Action Plan



Healthy lakes and ponds, rivers, wetlands, and watersheds are essential for a robust economy, resilient communities and ecosystems, and a vibrant quality of life.

The lens of climate change magnifies the need to restore clean water and improve ecosystem and community resilience. Over the last several years we have witnessed record high and near record low water levels in Lake Champlain, arising from atypical, unpredictable, and unprecedented weather patterns, punctuated by greater frequency and intensity of rain events and prolonged periods of drought.

Act 64, the Vermont Clean Water Act, charts a course to reduce phosphorus pollution in Vermont waters. Cleaner water can only be assured with sufficient revenue to support water quality improvement projects, a board governance structure that incorporates public priorities, and adequate personnel and accessible public information.

The state must lead this effort and build on the momentum created by Act 64. The longer we wait to ensure all Vermont waters are swimmable, fishable, and drinkable, the more difficult and costly restoration will become.

Lake Champlain Basin Program

Leading by Example

Successful implementation of Act 64 requires an 'all in' approach, with each sector, including state government, doing its part to reduce pollutant-laden runoff. The state must lead by example through the comprehensive management of stormwater runoff and wastewater at state facilities.

All state-owned buildings and grounds, and all state-funded projects, must demonstrate wastewater and stormwater best management practices, including the use of low impact development and green infrastructure, to reduce sediment and nutrient runoff.

Over the last several years, staff and contractor training programs have been developed to increase the utilization, effectiveness, and longevity of green infrastructure. Expanding technical training programs and providing additional outreach materials to support state-owned and supported demonstration sites will increase knowledge of these practices among staff and contractors.

Act 64 Implementation

With the 0.2 percent surcharge on the property transfer tax expiring in 2018, identifying new and increased funding sources and other mechanisms to leverage funds that incentivize best practices for clean water, support water quality improvement projects, and strengthen enforcement, compliance, and technical assistance is critical to the successful implementation of Act 64.

In 2017, the state must establish equitable, continuous, reliable, and dedicated revenue sources of at least $68 million annually for the Clean Water Fund.

Citizen and municipal representation on the Clean Water Fund Board will ensure funding decisions align with public priorities for clean water.

The state must restructure the Clean Water Fund Board to include a majority of members from outside state government, including municipal representation.

The state must provide adequate personnel and effective communication channels to successfully implement Act 64, including the recently adopted Required Agricultural Practices.

Agencies must build capacity to implement new policies and regulations. Recruiting, training, and retaining additional technically skilled and experienced staff, improving information technology, and enhancing communication resources are necessary to meet the statutory requirements of Act 64 and fulfill the state's commitment to the Lake Champlain TMDL.

Aquatic Invasive Species

Aquatic invasive species threaten the health of Vermont waters. Their dense growth can prevent recreational use, impede navigation, and cause environmental harm. Since 2015, two new aquatic invasive species – starry stonewort and Asian clam – have invaded Vermont. The threat of aquatic invasive species and the need for spread prevention and control programs has never been greater.

The state must increase support for state and municipal aquatic invasive species spread prevention and control programs.

Public Access and Recreation

Experience shapes our values and perspective. Providing opportunities for all Vermonters – regardless of socioeconomic status, physical ability, or geographic location – to swim, boat, fish, or simply be near water is integral to sustain broad public support for clean water initiatives.

The state must increase and improve public access, including for non-motorized recreation on Lake Champlain, particularly in southern Vermont, and rivers throughout the Lake Champlain Basin.

VTCAC Members

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