



# 2019 Lake Champlain Action Plan

Lake Champlain, its basin, and its tributaries are Vermont's most important natural assets and beloved features of our state's green mountains and blue waters. The land within the basin is home to 67% of Vermont's population while the lake provides 40% of Vermont's population with drinking water. The basin supports the majority of Vermont's economy and GDP, so **further investment in a Vermont Clean Water and Climate Change Economy must be aggressively pursued** to assure these assets are drinkable, fishable, and swimmable for future generations. Vermont must modernize its critical clean water infrastructure for its residents to thrive and expand their economic opportunities.

## Increase Clean Water Funding

The state must create an equitable and sustainable revenue plan that increases, by at least \$30 million, the funds allocated annually to **assure these Public Trust assets are protected and restored**, and to fulfill Vermont's obligations under state and federal clean water law.

Clean water funding must:

- Target the most significant sources of water pollution, **restore natural systems, and improve quality of life for Vermonters** and visitors;
- Invest in **sustainable long-term economic growth grounded in access to clean water**;
- Build upon a foundation of existing capital investments for clean water infrastructure, partnered with **innovative capital finance incentives and tools to increase total funding sources**;
- Address polluted stormwater runoff from our roads, subdivisions, and farms, and other precipitation-driven sources as a primary area of focus and expenditure;
- Be based upon a **transparent Polluter Pays principle**, assuring equity in an all-in approach to personal pollution prevention, and ensuring an effective compliance and enforcement system to achieve environmental standards; and
- Support **clean water projects in all regions of the state**, in recognition that Lake Champlain is a catalyst for a broader statewide set of needs for a healthy and sustainable environment and economy.

## **Enforce Polluter Pays**

The state must commit personnel and technical staff, and enhance communication channels to fully implement Act 64, and ensure compliance with, and enforcement of, clean water program requirements, particularly Required Agricultural Practices and new stormwater regulations.

**Regulatory agencies must be fully staffed** to support the transition to a Clean Water Economy in a period of changing climate. Public funds should be tied to a commitment to achieve full compliance with water quality rules.

## **Identify Alternative Agricultural Models**

Vermont needs both clean water and a thriving farming sector for a healthy economy. Clean water and farm viability must be integrated—these are shared values in Vermont. The farm economy in Vermont is under extreme financial stress and is facing a significant transition. The **state needs to take a stronger leadership role in helping the farming sector through this transition to a more stable financial future.** Vermont must advocate for federal programs and incentives to provide Vermont farmers with better access to innovative technical expertise in order to regain and maintain farm viability that is compatible with clean water and a more sustainable market.

## **Lead by Example with Public Projects**

Public-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 and showcase Vermont's commitment to clean water for sustainable agricultural, governmental, municipal, and recreational operations.

## **Prevent Aquatic Invasive Species Proliferation**

The state must increase support for aquatic **invasive species prevention and control** programs and build upon decades of invasive species education and management, including mandatory boat and trailer inspections along highways and at high-use launch facilities.

## **Improve and Increase Public Access and Recreation**

The state must increase and improve public access, including for non-motorized recreation on Lake Champlain, particularly in southern Vermont, and on rivers throughout the Lake Champlain Basin. Vermont should consider new user fees or find other funding to **expand access for all Vermonters** to support our recreational tourist economy.

## **Address and Monitor Emerging Contaminants**

While nutrient pollution has been a primary focus for many years, the state must address emerging contaminants whenever they are discovered in our ground and surface waters to protect these Public Trust assets. Increased **investment in contaminant monitoring using technologies and data management systems** from our advanced tech industry and higher educational institutions will inform creative solutions for prioritized pollution prevention and clean-up of contaminated waters.

## **Invest in Vermont's Clean Water and Climate Change Economy**

Prioritizing **investment in our water infrastructure**, incorporating climate change resilience in bridges, roads, and other community infrastructure will provide significant **positive environmental and social benefits with jobs and economic opportunities in all our rural communities**, both avoiding water quality impairment and reducing the impact and recovery costs of catastrophic storms.

### **VTCAC Members**

Lori Fisher, Chair, Williston, Nonprofit Executive Director  
Eric Clifford, Starksboro, Dairy Farmer  
Wayne Elliott, Essex Junction, Engineer  
Robert Fischer, Barre, South Burlington Water Quality Superintendent  
Bill Howland, Isle La Motte, Environmental Scientist  
Sen. Ginny Lyons, Chittenden District  
David Mears, Montpelier, Nonprofit Executive Director  
Mark Naud, South Hero, Attorney  
Rep. Carol Ode, Burlington  
Jeff Wennberg, Rutland, Rutland Department of Public Works Commissioner

