



2020 Lake Champlain Action Plan

Vermont Citizens Advisory Committee
on Lake Champlain's Future

Lake Champlain and its tributaries are vital and beloved features of the State of Vermont. The land within the Basin is home to 67% of Vermont's population, while the Lake provides about 40% of us with drinking water. Economically, the Basin makes up the majority of Vermont's GDP. Unfortunately, despite decades of public concern and efforts to improve water quality, significant water pollution problems persist. Although much of Lake Champlain is in good condition, several parts of the Lake are seriously compromised. A future of drinkable, fishable, and swimmable waters throughout Lake Champlain for future generations is clearly in doubt. Vermont must modernize its critical water infrastructure and significantly reduce nonpoint source pollution for its residents, visitors, and the regional economy to thrive based on a cleaner Lake Champlain.

Water Quality Monitoring Must Expand

Clean Water Funding must include new data collection efforts that objectively monitor impaired waters in more locations, not only to ascertain pollution reduction progress, but also to improve our understanding of problems requiring innovative solutions. Clean water funding initiatives should be reprioritized biannually to reflect results of quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the effectiveness of each existing and proposed program element. The ultimate success or failure of clean water investments will be clear in actual water quality changes, which requires empirical documentation. Increased screening for new generation contaminants will help Vermont recognize and respond to emerging pollutant issues before they become greater and more expensive problems.

Reliance on Voluntary Compliance is Inadequate

The state must not be complacent about the enforcement of water quality laws, rules, and regulations. Voluntary compliance is commendable. When considered alone it has proven markedly inadequate through decades of experience. There is no indication this reality will change through the implementation of Acts 64 and 76. Public sentiments are profoundly clear that Vermont must make a greater commitment to ensure compliance with and enforcement of clean water programs, Required Agricultural Practices, and storm-water regulations.

Annual Report of the Vermont Citizens Advisory Committee
(VTCAC) on Lake Champlain's Future
A requirement of 10 V.S.A. §1961



Urban Infrastructure Requires Significant New Resources

Upgrades of urban wastewater and stormwater infrastructure are critical to meeting water quality goals. Routing stormwater through treatment in combined sewers can be effective in most conditions, but combined sewer overflows from significant storm events are high in the public consciousness of infrastructure inadequacies. Public funds must be allocated to address urban infrastructure improvements to improve water quality.

Natural Systems Solutions Present a Significant Opportunity to Improve Watershed Health

The abundance of open and undeveloped land in Vermont provides us with a unique opportunity to improve water quality in Lake Champlain, and statewide, using strategies to protect and restore wetlands, floodplains, and forested headwaters and tributaries. Protections for these critical resources should be enhanced and public investments in restoration programs should be increased.

Farms Need Help with Alternative Production Models

Vermont needs both cleaner water and a thriving farming sector. As national and international market policies continue to generate dire stress for agriculture in Vermont, farm viability now requires dramatic transitions in operations and products. The state needs to take a far stronger leadership role to enable the farming sector to transition to a more stable financial future that reduces negative impacts on water quality. Vermont must provide farmers with better access to alternative models of agriculture, make available the required innovative technical expertise for transition, and promote federal and state financial assistance to reduce the burdens of existing debts on outmoded facilities. Strong leadership is critical to avoid widespread farm failures, to redesign Vermont agriculture to be sustainable, and to significantly reduce the non-point source water pollution from agricultural lands.

Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Needs Support

Recent interceptions of propagules of disastrous invasive species (not yet established in Lake Champlain) by Boat Launch Stewards inspecting boat trailers, highlight the unrelenting ecosystem pressures of recreational boating. Every boat launch facility is a port of entry for invasive species. Many would-be invasives, if established here, would cause countless millions of dollars in damage to recreation, water quality, infrastructure, and would compromise aquatic ecosystem integrity. The state must increase and maintain support for aquatic invasive species prevention and control programs and build upon decades of invasive species education and management, including increased financial support for mandatory boat and trailer inspections along highways and at launch facilities.

Public Access for Recreation Must be Expanded

The state must increase and improve public access for non-motorized recreation on Lake Champlain, particularly in southern Vermont, and on rivers and ponds throughout the Lake Champlain Basin. Vermont should find funding to expand access for all Vermonters, both to support our recreational tourist economy and to increase the opportunities for Vermonters and visitors to experience and appreciate water-based resources.



Québec Ministry of the Environment

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Hilary Solomon	– Conservation District Manager	2/28/2021
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