

2023

Lake Champlain Action Plan

Achieving a Thriving Lake Champlain Basin Ecosystem

Vermont Citizens Advisory Committee on Lake Champlain's Future

The confluence of the under-resourcing of critical programs, climate change impacts, and emerging contaminants pollution poses a serious threat to water quality, public health, and community and environmental resilience in the Lake Champlain Watershed.



The Vermont Citizens Advisory Committee calls on the State of Vermont to make urgent investments to restore Lake Champlain, increase resilience within its watershed, and assure that its communities will thrive.

INVEST IN AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES PREVENTION

Aquatic invasive species (AIS) are a significant threat to the ecological and recreational health of Lake Champlain and the lakes and ponds of the state. AIS have the potential to compromise aquatic ecosystem integrity and cause billions of dollars in damage to recreation, water quality, infrastructure, and property values. To mitigate and prevent further damage from AIS, Vermont must increase investment in staffing and funding for its AIS programs. The State should consider: a new funding source involving a mandatory boat decal for motorized and nonmotorized craft; a mandatory watercraft inspection and certification program and a high-profile inspection station; and a live bait ban similar to Quebec.

PRIORITIES

- Increase investment in **AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES** education and management.
- Increase and improve **EQUITABLE PUBLIC ACCESS** with priority for non-motorized recreation on Lake Champlain and on rivers and ponds throughout the Lake Champlain Basin.
- Invest in infrastructure and practices that **BUILD COMMUNITY RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE CHANGE** impacts and restore ecological function.
- Provide **SUPPORT AND RESOURCES TO FARMERS** to facilitate the agricultural transition to sustainability and ensure consistent enforcement of regulations, including review of the 1993 MOU between ANR and VAAF.
- Fund **ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION OF CONTAMINANT POLLUTION** including PFAS, pesticides and chlorides.

\$2.5 billion recreation economy

VISITORS & RESIDENTS SUPPORT the State by taking part in the many **RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES** afforded by a clean lake.



ALMOST 250,000

RESIDENTS rely on Lake Champlain for safe drinking water.

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INVEST IN NATURAL AND DEVELOPED INFRASTRUCTURE

Climate change is causing frequent and severe precipitation and flooding, resulting in increased risks to public safety, infrastructure damages, property loss, and pollutant loading. Restoration and protection of river corridors, floodplains, wetlands, and adjacent woody vegetated riparian areas are among the State's principal and cost-effective community resilience strategies and help to achieve other benefits such as clean water and ecological health. To avoid water quality and public health impacts of failing onsite wastewater treatment systems, the State needs to be more proactive in providing education, oversight, and outreach to homeowners about their septic systems. In addition, investments that support adaptive, resilient, and compact settlement and that help Vermont communities, particularly those that may be vulnerable to climate-related severe weather events, must be prioritized.

EXPAND EQUITABLE PUBLIC ACCESS AND RECREATION

The pandemic reinforced the importance our lands and waters have on the health and wellbeing of Vermonters, as well as how they support our local economy with hundreds of millions of recreation and tourism dollars. Vermont needs to allocate ARPA funds and other resources to expand shoreline and water access for **ALL**. Expanding access will foster greater experiences with and stewardship of the State's natural resources. The CAC particularly recommends strategies to improve access especially in the south lake and for marginalized and historically disenfranchised communities. Continued investments in the development of outdoor recreation businesses will further strengthen public access opportunities and Vermont's recreation economy.

SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND CONSISTENT REGULATORY ENFORCEMENT

State leadership is needed to encourage Vermont agriculture to be sustainable-- with an emphasis on significant reductions of agricultural nonpoint source water pollution. Vermont must accelerate its diversification of value-added agricultural products to protect its farmers, farm economy, and environment. The Legislature must support our farm sector through investments in specialized equipment, full funding of the programs offered to the agricultural community, enhanced infrastructure for local distribution of agricultural products, and resources to small farms that enable effective implementation of best practices. Technical and educational support is needed to help farmers leverage available funding opportunities from the Northeast Dairy Innovation Center, Natural Resource Conservation Service, and other sources. To support our farmers and protect water quality, Vermont needs to ensure that the enforcement of required agricultural practices and clean water laws are consistent and efficient. The State must lead and revisit the 1993 Memorandum of Understanding between the Agency of Natural Resources and the Agency of Agriculture Farm and Markets to update expectations, clarify responsibilities, improve communication and establish accountability metrics between agencies to restore the agricultural community's and the public's trust.

DEVELOP SOLUTIONS FOR CONTAMINANTS POLLUTION

Chemical contaminants in the environment pose health risks to the public. Eliminating toxic contamination is essential to protect health and avoid long-term environmental damage. Vermont must continue to monitor, assess and mitigate the risk of chemical contamination in our surface and groundwater including PFAS, pesticides and chlorides.

Vermont's
**Climate
Action Plan**
reminds us to

DO NO HARM
to **PEOPLE,**
COMMUNITIES,
and the **LAND**

VTACAC Members

Mark Naud	Chair, Attorney/Business Owner	2/28/2024
Denise Smith	Vice Chair, Population Health Director	2/28/2023
Eric Clifford	Dairy Farmer	2/29/2023
Karina Daley	Environmental Scientist	2/28/2024
Wayne Elliott	Engineer	2/29/2023
Robert Fischer	Water Facility Operator	2/28/2024
Lori Fisher	Nonprofit Executive Director	2/29/2023

Hilary Solomon	Conservation District Manager	2/28/2024
Vacant	Public at large	
Vacant	Public at large	
Representative Kari Dolan		
Representative Carol Ode		
Senator Christopher Bray		
Senator Randy Brock		

