

Notes for Meeting with John Rodgers— 4/23/25 @ 10:30 and House Env. Comm. members

To: Amy, Larry, Kristi, jbartholomew, echapin, mtagliavia, klogan, lsatcowitz, cpritchard, saustin, morth, aadams

Dear Chair Sheldon, Co-chair Labor, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing today to follow up on the status of the Lake in Crisis bill, H.113, sponsored by Woody Page and co-sponsored by at least fifteen bipartisan representatives. I understand that many pressing matters require your attention, but this bill is critically important to all of us—especially those living in the northern NEK and beyond.

Lake Memphremagog faces many of the same issues that once threatened Lake Carmi when it was designated a lake in crisis—serious issues such as rising phosphorus levels and the increasing incidence of cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) blooms.

However, Memphremagog also faces unique environmental challenges, foremost among them the dangerously high levels of hazardous PFOS and PFOA in four species of fish tissue. Alarming high percentages of cancerous Brown Bullhead have also been found here—nowhere else in Vermont. The cause of these cancers is still unknown, but research shows that such cases only occur in environmentally contaminated waters.

Adding to these concerns is the state's only landfill, which looms over the lake—literally. The “pilot” leachate treatment facility is now poised to become permanent and may begin importing leachate from out-of-state. The current “pilot” permit contains nothing that would prevent this outcome.

The PFAS treatment process used in the “pilot” is insufficient. Many PFAS chemicals escape capture and remain in the leachate, which is currently disposed of in Montpelier and other out-of-state wastewater treatment facilities. The filtered PFAS residues are then returned to the landfill, where they re-enter the leachate loop. And yes—landfills leak.

H.113 **“will include controls on discharges of effluent into its tributaries.”** PFAS-laden leachate has been proven to leak into the soil and groundwater at the landfill and has been discharged—only partially filtered—into the Black River, a tributary less than half a mile from South Bay. A temporary moratorium on leachate disposal into Newport's WWTF on the Clyde River came only after more than 40 million gallons had been disposed of there between 2010 and 2019. Even after the moratorium, the WWTF continues to discharge PFAS at levels exceeding Vermont's Drinking Water Standard. As you know, 175,000 Quebec residents rely on this lake for their drinking water.

Even if PFAS contamination were stopped today, its cumulative effects will linger. The health and safety of our environment, people, fish, and wildlife—and our regional economy—will remain at risk.

For Lake Carmi, the “Lake in Crisis” designation came too late. Please don't let the same fate befall Lake Memphremagog. This environmental crisis can be averted—or at least effectively

mitigated—with your support and passage of this bill:

 [H.113 – Lake in Crisis Bill](#)

There are at least sixteen bipartisan sponsors, and I believe it enjoys even broader support in the legislature.

Thank you for recognizing H.113 as a bill worthy of fast-tracking for passage in 2025.

Peggy Stevens
Charleston

#2 – Additional Support for H.113

Passage of H.113 would support efforts to protect international Lake Memphremagog from further environmental degradation, even without an immediate allocation of funds. A “Lake in Crisis” (LIC) designation would:

- **Raise awareness** among lakeshore property owners and municipalities on both sides of the US–Canada border to implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) to reduce phosphorus runoff and toxic algae blooms, as well as runoff of road salt, pesticides, and herbicides—many of which contain PFAS.
- **Highlight the necessity** of BMPs throughout the entire watershed—including rivers and streams contributing to Lake Memphremagog (¾ of whose water comes from the U.S., even though ¾ of the lake is in Quebec).
- **Improve eligibility** for state, federal, and private grants to municipalities and nonprofits working to restore water quality.
- **Protect regional economies** that rely on the lake’s natural beauty and recreational value.
- **Demonstrate Vermont’s respect** for Quebec citizens whose drinking water comes from the lake.
- **Uphold the 1909 Boundary Waters Treaty**, which requires both countries to prevent cross-border environmental harm.
- **Compel Vermont’s state agencies** (ANR, Agriculture, and Human Services) to take greater action in addressing PFAS pollution in air, soil, and water.

- **Support environmental justice** for the Memphremagog watershed, which has effectively become a sacrifice zone. Though the tri-county NEK generates only 7% of Vermont's waste, 73% is dumped in Coventry, with another 20% imported from out of state.

The urgency of this issue is underscored by the looming expiration of the **Act 250 Moratorium on leachate disposal** within the watershed on **January 1, 2026**. This moratorium must become a permanent ban.

Related Legislation

H.303 – An Act Relating to the Use of Septage, Sludge, and Biosolids

Dear Senator Lyons, Senator Gulick, and Members of the Senate Committee on Health & Welfare:

H.303, currently under review by the House Committee on Environment, addresses the dangers of PFAS contamination through biosolids. I urge your committee to consider an identical Senate version. There is **no beneficial use** for biosolids with PFAS content—a fact tragically proven in states like Maine and Texas. Both Maine and Connecticut have banned biosolids; Vermont must do the same.

Contaminated biosolids can pollute air, water, and soil—and in turn, food systems. Maine has seen farmers forced out of business after PFAS was found in milk and crops. The long-term costs to land, people, and agriculture far outweigh short-term disposal savings.

Notably, **most biosolids in the Coventry landfill come from out of state**. If Vermont limits imports, we could manage our own biosolids sustainably without endangering local farmland.

H.286 – Tightening PFAS Drinking Water Standards

Sponsored by J. Masland and M. Mrowicki, H.286 seeks to update Vermont's PFAS limit. The current standard (20 ppt) is outdated. The EPA has now designated PFOS and PFOA as hazardous with **no known safe level of exposure**.

2025 VT H0238 (Summary) An act relating to the phaseout of consumer products containing added perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances. Sponsors A. Sheldon, E. Chapin; Pending: Senate Health and Welfare Committee

Broader Environmental & Policy Considerations

- **State Autonomy:** Can Vermont resist efforts by the current federal administration to weaken EPA regulations? States have the right to exceed federal standards—Vermont

must exercise that right.

- **Solid Waste Reform:** Vermont needs a **Solid Waste Management Working Group** to revise Act 78, address landfill siting, hazardous waste, and ensure adequate escrow for NEWSVT's closure/post-closure costs (to ensure sufficient funding for many decades after closure).
 - **Planning for Future Landfills:** Vermont should plan for a new landfill **downstate**, closer to where most waste is generated. Further expansion of the Coventry site is not an option. A public-private partnership (as in Maine) could balance operation and accountability—while banning out-of-state imports.
 - **Leachate Treatment:** The current “pilot” facility in Coventry must not be granted permanent status nor be permitted to discharge into the Memphremagog watershed.
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Other Concerns

- **Federal Policy Impacts on Vermont & Quebec:**
 - Executive orders affecting air/water quality
 - Haskell Library incident and border complications
 - Economic harm to local businesses
 - ICE threats to migrant workers
 - First Amendment infringements (e.g., Mohsen Mahdawi)
- **Education Planning:**

Rural Vermont schools—like Charleston's Community School—are vital community hubs. Consolidation must balance census numbers with rural values.

Homelessness:

The motel sheltering plan is costly and ineffective. Alternatives must be explored. April 1st evictions are unacceptable. Let's also dispel myths about out-of-state migration skewing our homeless data.