**Draft Meeting Summary
Recording** [**here**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Mr8pxPo9pY&list=PLEnhCxkq056jJc_rvYs_CPd5yB9KQfCfi&index=27)

**Committee Members Present:** Denise Smith (Chair), Breck Bowden, Sen. Randy Brock, Eric Clifford, Wayne Elliot, Bob Fischer, Lori Fisher, Sen. Martine Larocque Gulick, Andrew Milliken, Rep. Carol Ode, Hilary Solomon, Alison Spasyk

**Committee Members Absent:** Karina Dailey (Vice Chair), Rep. Kari Dolan

**LCBP Staff in Attendance:** Mae Kate Campbell, Katie Darr, Sonya Vogel

**Presenters:** Joe Thouin (Lake George Park Commission)

**Public Guests**: Rep. Sarita Austin, Crea Lintilhac

Meeting summary prepared by Katie Darr, Lake Champlain Basin Program

**1.**     **Welcome and Introductions** (5 min) – Denise Smith, Chair

**2.**     **Public Comments** (5 min) – Denise Smith, Chair

Crea recommended UVM’s Water Resources Institute’s Seminar Series: Water Connects. They take place at 3:30 on Mondays in person at Farrell Hall 006 at UVM or online via Zoom. Learn more at <https://www.uvm.edu/seagrant/programs/events/water-connects-water-resources-institute-fall-seminar-series>.

**3.**  **Chair’s Update** – Denise Smith, Chair

No update at this time.

**4. ACTION ITEM:** Review and vote on Draft October 7th meeting summary (5 min) – Denise Smith, Chair

Lori asked that “request” be updated to “directive” in reference to EPA’s agricultural enforcement.

* Motion to approve the meeting summary as amended by: Sen. Gulick
* Second by: Andrew Milliken
* Discussion: No further discussion
* Abstentions: Breck Bowden
* Vote: All in favor

**5.**    **Lake George Septic Inspection Program Presentation** – Joe Thouin, Deputy Director, Lake George Park Commission

Joe provided an overview of the origins and results of the Lake George Septic Inspection Program. The [presentation](https://www.lcbp.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/LGPC-Septic-Regs-and-Results-VTCAC-Champlain-11-4-2024.pdf) and follow-up materials including septic inspection regulations, [Lake George Park Commission regulations](https://www.lcbp.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/lgpc-wastewater-regulations-646-3.pdf), [Septic FAQs and educational cards/flyers](https://lgpc.ny.gov/septic-systems), and [inspection materials provided to landowners](https://www.lcbp.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/LGPC-Pre-and-Post-inspection-materials-provided-to-landowners.pdf)  are available with the meeting follow-up materials on the [VTCAC webpage](https://www.lcbp.org/about-us/how-we-work/citizen-advisory-committees/vermont-cac/).

*Discussion:*

* Bob commended the program. He noted the challenges in Vermont with 55% of Vermonters on septic.
* Andrew asked for guidance on the distance from the lake shoreline/waterways for a similar effort in Vermont portion of the basin.
	+ Joe noted soils and slopes are important factors. 500’ from a waterbody is a critical environmental area in Lake George’s regulations. They also looked at the literature to understand septic plumes and how far phosphorus moves underground in different soil types. He recommended looking at the predominant soil types and consulting the literature to understand the septic plumes in the basin.
* Rep. Austin noted that in her first year as a Legislator, she submitted a bill based on Massachusetts’ Act 5 which requires septic inspection upon transfer. If re-elected, she is considering resubmitting the bill. She asked 3 questions (1) what data did they use to understand groundwater impacts, (2) what does the workforce requirements for inspectors look like, and (3) did realtors push back on inspection at the sale of house?
	+ (1) Joe will share the data on groundwater impacts. (2) The Lake George Park Commission has 2 seasonal inspectors with one retained year-round to manage the data in the winter. They have noticed a backlog in engineers and contractors to keep up with the inspections and needed repairs. Local haulers have started procuring additional trucks and staff. (3) He has not heard pushback on the inspection requirements at property sale since this is a normal time for inspections and there is a lot of money changing hands.
* Breck echoed the positive comments about the program. He noted that one of the biggest risk factors is owners failing to inspect their systems regularly. He asked who/what gives the Lake George Park Commission the authority to require these inspections and what lessons might be learned from how the park commission started the program.
	+ Joe shared NYS Environmental Conservation law requires the park commission to develop wastewater regulations in the Lake George basin. Early on, the park commission discussed septic inspection upon real estate transfer but that was not enough for Lake George. Bolton and Queensbury already had inspection upon transfer requirements which helped provide the political will and community buy-in for the Lake George inspection program.
	+ Breck suggested the CAC put together model regulations that towns can use based on regulations in NY. Joe noted that Loon Lake used a model ordinance to start their inspection upon transfer program.
* Crea asked if found system septic failures are also a problem.
	+ Joe noted that no system type is immune to failure and some people don’t pay attention to systems that need attention and inspection.
* Crea asked if the LGPC discourages garbage disposals.
	+ Joe confirmed that generally it is not a great idea to have a garbage disposal with a septic system as it counts as a bedroom. There have been several cases of systems that would have been substandard due to the size of the system/number of bedrooms. To rectify the issue, they remove their garbage disposals.
* Katie asked about challenges associated with the program.
	+ Joe noted that many folks are not prepared for their inspections. Observation ports, boxes, and tanks need to be exposed for the inspection. LGPC provides guidance in advance but sometimes systems are not prepped properly. The sizing of tanks is recommended based on the number of bedrooms but what constitutes a “bedroom” isn’t defined by the Department of Health which leads to challenges.
* Lori asked if the education and outreach materials could be shared.
	+ Joe will share the materials.

**6.**   **2025 Lake Champlain Action Plan Final Review and Release Planning –** Denise Smith, Chair

The committee walked the draft formatted document and conducted a high-level red flag review.

*Takeaways:*

* More contrast is needed to improve readability.
* Move the venn diagram fully within the photo.
* Confirm accessibility/color review has been completed.
* Include year and location of flood photo.
* Bold/emphasize key points and requests.

The committee discussed plans for the Action Plan release event on December 9th from 5-7pm. Katie has reached out to several Chittenden County venues including the Sailing Center, the Saint John’s Club, and several breweries/distilleries. She will also reach out to Main Street Landing in Burlington and a few other venues. Committee members were supportive of moving this event to different venues and in the future holding it earlier in the fall and hosting it in a different part of the watershed. Members were supportive of this being a hybrid event as long as CAC members committed to attending in person where possible. LCC and LCBP will help publicize the event.

**ACTION ITEM:** Review and vote to approve draft action plan.

* Motion to approve draft with edits as discussed by: Wayne Elliot
* Second by: Carol Ode
* Discussion: Breck asked if the committee will have an opportunity to review the document again. Katie confirmed that she will send the action plan as amended and the committee will have another opportunity to read it. If any edits are made in this final review, they would be very minor.
* Vote: All in favor

Denise thanked everyone for their hard work on the action plan. Before the presentations to the legislature in January, the CAC will tighten up talking points. The committee is targeting the last week of January again for State House presentations.

**7.**     **Meeting Wrap-Up Discussion**

The VTCAC is scheduled to meet next December 9th from 5-7pm. This meeting will be the Action Plan release event and will feature a presentation about the State of the Lake by LCBP staff.